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Anna Cora Ritchie (Mowatt).

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The Mute Singer.

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THE

MUTE SINGER.

A Novel.

BY

ANNA CORA RITCHIE (MOWATT),

AUTHOR OF "FAIRY FINGERS," "PEN PORTRAITS," "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
AN ACTRESS," "MIMIC LIFE," "TWIN ROSES," "ARMAND,"
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THE MUTE SINGER.

CHAPTER I.

SYLVIE.

THE height of a house in Paris is by no means indicative of the grandeur of the abode. In a remote portion of the Rue St. Denis stands many a dwelling that, if placed beside the most sumptuous mansions of Grosvenor Square, would tower above them, and yet is the residence of a host of humble toilers for daily bread, who seem to mount nearer to the skies according to the degree of their poverty. One might almost imagine that the promise of easier access to heaven than is accorded to the rich, gave them this upward tendency.

In one of these lofty habitations for the lowly, a hundred and forty steps led to an apartment in the sixth story, where Everard de la Roche lodged, with his wife and daughter. The bareness of the room betokened an absence of worldly possessions. The red-tiled floor had no covering, the windows no curtains, the bed no drapery. Indeed, the latter was merely a framed canvas that could be folded up at pleasure. A few yards of faded calico, stretched across the further corner, converted that portion into a small chamber. In one window feebly bloomed a pot of unhealthy-looking mignionette—the favorite flower of the French poor, and often to be found in their meanest abodes. The enumeration of the furniture will occupy little space. It consisted of a wash-stand, four rush-bottomed chairs, a low stool, a worm-eaten chest (the receptacle of the family wardrobe), a tiny charcoal cooking-stove, and yonder—strangely unsuited to the place—a piano! An old, battered affair, with keys as yellow as a tobacco-chewer's teeth, but still a veritable piano. Just above the venerable instrument, an unpainted deal shelf held a number of broken-backed books, some pieces of music, and a tin cup containing a few common flowers. Upon a corresponding shelf on the opposite side of the room, were various kitchen utensils, neatly arranged; a cupboard beneath inclosed a sparse supply of crockery and other household goods.

It is June, and the twilight of a long summer day is approaching.

Several sheets of music are scattered upon the floor. The piano is open; on the three-legged stool before it sits a young girl. Her head rests upon one arm, which is stretched over the instrument as though she had fallen forward from exhaustion; the other arm hangs listlessly by her side—she is asleep.

The outline of her undeveloped form is delicate, yet too angular for grace. The coarse grey stocking and rough shoe cannot wholly disguise the smallness and shapeliness of a foot and ankle somewhat liberally revealed by her position. Her complexion is sickly, almost sallow in its hue. Her features are too much sharpened by want and suffering to be deemed handsome; but the mingled blandness and firmness of the mouth, the thin, slightly curved nostrils, and the broad brow, indicate force of character. The only impression of beauty is conveyed by the arch of the slender eyebrows, the length and darkness of the lashes that lie upon her colorless cheeks, the silkiness and luxuriance of the purple-black hair that, escaping from her comb, sweeps down her shoulders, and falls like a rich veil over the yellow piano-keys. Her garb is very humble; simply a dark blue calico dress, relieved by a narrow linen collar and cuffs, and a white apron. Her appearance is so childlike—so immature, that one can hardly believe she has entered her eighteenth year.

Close to the dingy window, as though to catch the last lingering rays of light, sits a pale and mournful-looking woman. With a languid air, she slowly draws the needle in and out of her work, as though even that effort were too great for her strength. Pain has left a faint contraction on her brow, and the shadow of weary dejection that clouds her still comely features, tells that she has ceased to fight against the ills of life—or, rather, that she has been conquered by them, without ever battling at all.

An imperative knock breaks the silence. Before Madame de la Roche can give permission to enter, the door opens, and a face, as sharp and sombre-hued as though it had been cut out of parchment, is thrust into the room, and after the twinkling grey eyes have made a rapid survey, is followed by the spare and diminutive form of an old man, carrying a violin under his arm. Although the heavy eyebrows that meet above his prominent nose, and the bristling moustache that conceals his closely-folding lips, retain their youthful blackness, his long beard and the fringe of hair that enrings his bald head are white as foam. Those small, sharp, restless eyes seem to glance everywhere in an instant, and to pierce what they look upon. The whole countenance is sufficiently sour to set on edge the teeth of a very impressible associate; a striking illustration of that "vinegar aspect" which Shakspeare describes as belonging to those who will not

> "Show their teeth in way of smile,
> Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

"Eh? Ah! what's this?" he exclaimed, marching up to the slumbering maiden. "Lazy little owl! This is the way she practises; this is the way she makes use of her time, is it?"

"She has practised five hours without stirring," answered the mother, in a querulous tone. "She fell asleep a few moments ago from sheer fatigue, and I had not the heart to rouse her. You know, Maitre Beaujeu, she practises faithfully seven hours every day. Let her have a little rest!"

"Rest, indeed! Do you suppose *I* ever rest? I can tell you she need not look forward to rest in our profession. How she sleeps, to be sure!"

He stood for a moment contemplating the young girl, who slept on undisturbed by the noise. A close observer might have detected something like compassion under the musician's rude mask of severity.

"Don't disturb her!" pleaded the mother. "You're always so hard upon her."

Those words extinguished the faintly kindling spark of pity, and awakened the spirit of contradiction ever strong in Maitre Beaujeu's breast.

"Don't disturb her, when it's the hour for her lesson? That's a pretty joke! Really you are quite facetious, Madame de la Roche. Do you suppose I have so many hours to spare that I can teach her for nothing, and yet suit my time to hers? Eh, do you think that?"

He turned to Sylvie, and shook her rudely, shouting in her ears, "Wake up! wake up, I say! You are not good-looking enough to be indulged with playing the sleeping beauty!"

Sylvie awoke with a start. Perhaps amazement caused her to open her eyes more widely than was natural, but they seemed too large for her delicate face. Judging from the color of her hair, eyebrows, and lashes, one expected to see a pair of black eyes, and could not but wonder at finding the iris of a clear and not very deep blue.

"Have I been sleeping?" she asked, gathering up her hair in confusion. "Oh, mother, why did you not wake me? I deserve to be well scolded, Maitre Beaujeu," added she, looking up into his face with a smile that said, "But do not give me my deserts; do not scold me!"

The smile, while it displayed her white and regular teeth, showed that the mouth was too expansive for beauty, though somewhat redeemed by the flexibility of the lips. It was essentially a singer's mouth.

"Don't chatter, scarecrow! To your lesson! Let me hear you sing the air we tried yesterday."

Sylvie succeeded in prisoning the abundant tresses which had several times baffled her, as she attempted to gather them in her small hands.

Maitre Beaujeu laid his violin upon the table as tenderly as though it had been a living thing—indeed, it is doubtful whether he would have dealt so gently with anything alive—took his place at he piano, and played a brief prelude.

Sylvie sang, and Beethoven himself could not have asked for a voice better suited, by its depth and richness, to make vocal his glorious strain. As you listened to her, and looked at her, you could not conceive that from that poor, fragile, feeble little frame, could issue such a volume of delicious sound,—a *contralto* voice so powerful, so clearly sweet, so touchingly sympathetic, so rare in its combinations and quality. And her own melody seemed to transform her, as it gushed from her lips. The rosy flush that leaped up into her face extinguished its sallow tint—the large mouth took a symmetrical shape—the great eyes filled with a dewy lustre, and grew dark through the dilation of their pupils—mingling all the softness of blue with the brilliancy of black orbs. The angular figure assumed an attitude of unconscious grace—the very spirit of music thrilled through and through her whole being, and moulded its external into a new shape.

As she ceased, Maitre Beaujeu gave a growl which might have struck upon a stranger's ear as a signal of displeasure, but Sylvie comprehended his rough approbation. He placed page after page of music before her, and she sang on. Not a word was uttered between the pieces.

The mother had allowed her work to drop upon her lap, but the expression of her countenance told that she did not dare make any comment, or breathe a word of praise.

During an interval in which Sylvie was trying to re-arrange the music which had fallen on the floor while she slept, the buzz of whispering outside the door became audible in the silence. Maitre Beaujeu turned sharply round on his stool.

"There they are again! I'll not allow it. I'll not have my pupil sing to an audience that don't pay."

He made a rush to the door, but the movement had been heard without, and the sound of scampering feet ensued. The music-master only succeeded in capturing one of the group of listeners; it was Mathieu, the hunchbacked son of *Mère Gamboche*, who presided over a small booth for the sale of cakes and confections on the *Champs Elysées*, and who lodged on the same story as Sylvie and her parents.

"Ah! I've got you, little rascal, have I? Have I not forbidden any listening at this door? Do you want your long ears chopped off?" And the musician gave an emphatic pull, which must have produced a foretaste of this threatened punishment for the crime of listening.

"Ah! have pity! have pity, Maitre Beaujeu. I could not help it!—indeed I couldn't! I heard her voice as I was going up-stairs with a bundle of charcoal for my mother, and couldn't help stopping and listening! Besides, I have brought Ma'm'selle Sylvie her bouquet,—here it is!"

Maitre Beaujeu snatched the flowers and threw them into the passage.

Sylvie, with more courage than could have been anticipated from her timid mien, now came forward. She quietly took up the humble nosegay, saying, "Mathieu is so good he often brings me flowers—indeed, I should never receive any, were it not for him. He knows I like them only too well. Sometimes I fear he robs his sister, Ninette, who sells flowers, of her wares. Pray don't be so hard upon the poor boy, Maitre Beaujeu; he loves music so much, and has so few——"

She could not finish her sentence, for the music-master thrust her aside.

"How dare you interfere, you little fright! What do you want with flowers? Do you think they'll make you any handsomer?" Turning to Mathieu, he added: "Get out, now; and let me catch you again—that's all!"

He rounded his sentence with a kick that sent the terrified cripple staggering along the entry.

Then, closing the door savagely, he returned to the piano.

Sylvie was roused by this cruelty to her unfortunate friend;—she had evidently a high spirit.

"It's too bad, Maitre Beaujeu, to treat Mathieu so! Was it not by the same means you are reproving him for taking, that you first heard my voice? Was it not in passing our door to go to your own room that you heard me sing? And did you not often stop, just as he does? And one day, when I was singing in a rude style of my own—singing my own thoughts to my own tunes—did you not come in and snatch the sewing out of my hands, and say I was made for singing, not sewing? And did you not then propose to teach me? And now you punish Mathieu for listening! *A thing you did yourself!*"

"And you see no difference in *my* listening and that little rascally hunchback daring to listen? You are an idiot, and I shall never make anything of you! What if I *did* hear you—and what if I *did* teach you—and what if I *am* wasting time on you every day, as I have done for three years? You are too great a fool for any good to come out of my instructions. You'll never get an opportunity to use your voice and earn your bread by it. You needn't expect that you will!"

"Ah, no!" sighed the mother. "That's just what I always tell her; she'll never have an opportunity! It's waste of time; and the hire of the piano, for which we have to stint ourselves so much, is money thrown away. *I* was always *unlucky*—always—and so is every one that belongs to me!"

"Mother, you know I do not believe in *luck*, and Maitre Beaujeu cannot believe what he says. No, my master, you would not waste so many precious hours upon me if you believed your own words. You tell me that, although I am ugly as an owl, I have a great gift. I should not have known it if you had *not* told me; but as this gift has been entrusted to me, perhaps in compensation for my ugliness and poverty, who knows? God would not have consigned it to my keeping without granting me an opportunity of using it; that is my belief—my faith!"

"All very fine, but *faith* is not a current coin that will buy bread. And you can't always live on hope, though it *is* the natural food of youth. A few years of waiting, and watching, and disappointment, and you will cease to hope, as I do, and as millions have done before, and will do again."

"Not until I cease to believe in the good God!" answered Sylvie, gravely. "And that will never be!"

"Stop your preaching, and come back to your lesson! You get your hopefulness from that reckless father of yours, and much good his inexhaustible stock of hope has done him! Left him nothing but this little hole to lodge his hopes in."

"Ah! nothing ever prospered with him!" murmured Madame de la Roche.

"He don't deserve to prosper!" snarled Beaujeu. 'He is always pursuing phantoms, instead of marching under the banner of steady industry. But I suppose we are to spend the rest of the evening in discussions?"

Sylvie's only reply was to resume her place by the piano. Maitre Beaujeu churlishly took his seat, and the lesson continued.

Sylvie's father belonged to an excellent family of Provence—a family who claimed to be the offshoot of nobility. Everard de la Roche was born and bred a gentleman, according to the European acceptation of the word, which means he was born and fitted for no occupation—a gentleman of the aristocratic, do-nothing school. His father's income had been sufficiently large to enable him to live luxuriously *with prudence*, but the son chanced to be wholly deficient in that inestimable quality. When Everard became his father's heir, and found himself with ample means at his command, he proposed to his young wife that they should remove from Provence to Paris, and "*see the world*," Paris, to a Frenchman, being the *only world* worth recognising.

Hardly had they taken up their residence in the great capital, when Monsieur de la Roche launched into numberless extravagances. He was one of those light-hearted, sanguine men, who never look beyond the hour. He squandered his property in the most reckless manner. Now and then, as he felt his substance melting away, he embarked in some hazardous but Golconda-promising speculation, which usually left him poorer than before.

In a few years his means were exhausted. He then resorted to borrowing from any source that was accessible. He had no scruples of delicacy, for he always *promised*, and *intended* to pay—*when he could;* but scorned to contemplate the possibility that *such* a day might *never* come. He did not experience the faintest gratitude for these loans; they were a matter of business, he asserted. He never economized the money thus acquired, but often expended for an hour's indulgence a sum that would supply his family in food for a week.

By the time Sylvie had entered her tenth year, her father was reduced to such poverty that, one after another, all the valuables he possessed, down to his wife's jewelry and clothes, had been sold for bread. He had wearied out the patience, and drained the generosity of his former friends, who shunned, and finally cut, the unscrupulous borrower. The prospect of actual starvation now compelled him to exert himself; but he found it difficult to secure employment, and quite as hard to force himself to work when it was obtained. He had latterly fallen in with a notary who supplied him with a small amount of copying—drudgery for which he was scantily compensated.

Madame de la Roche resorted to her needle, a woman's unfailing resource, and earned a few francs each week. Sylvie aided her in this humble pursuit, until the gift of her magnificent voice was discovered by Maitre Beaujeu.

The music-master was a morose, and seemingly selfish old man; wretchedly poor, but too proud and too ascetic to assume the winning suavity, and resort to the cajoleries, by which many less skilful of his brethren gained pupils and won appreciation. His few scholars barely enabled him to support a bed-ridden mother and the aged domestic who attended upon her. But in spite of his hardness and coldness he adored his art; all the deep-lying tenderness of his impenetrable soul found vent in music. As stern as Luther, he was as easily melted by melody. While contemplating his ordinary appearance, it was as difficult to conceive the transforming softness produced upon him by harmonious sounds, as it is to picture Luther playing on his beloved flute or sweet-sounding guitar, and exclaiming with enthusiasm:

"It is the art of the Prophets! it is the only other art which, like theology, can calm the agitation of the soul, and put the devil to flight!"

Most assuredly, nothing else had power to put to flight the demons of ill-temper that perpetually haunted Maitre Beaujeu.

After the venerable musician by chance heard Sylvie's wonderful contralto voice, he paused to listen to it again and again, until its undeveloped capacity almost drove him wild. One day, losing all control over himself, he burst into the room, snatched away her work, and exclaimed:

"I'll teach you! Never touch a needle again!" Then regarding her in undisguised disappointment, added: "What a pity you are so ugly! But it shall not matter."

That voice had caused him to picture to himself a face and form as nearly angelic as could be found in mortal mould; and his disappointment can only be estimated by those who feel equal idolatry for physical beauty.

The homely Sylvie proved the most tractable and persevering of his pupils; but the loss of her needle, little as it earned, and the expense of hiring even that old, dilapidated piano (which, however, Maitre Beaujeu himself kept in the most perfect tune), caused her parents to endure greater privations than ever.

Her father, with his usual buoyancy, joyfully seized upon the new hope awakened by Maitre Beaujeu, and indulged in the wildest visions of the future. But the mother's spirits were not revived by the cheering prospect. She shook her head when Sylvie and her father talked of prosperity, and expressed her firm conviction that prosperity would never be a guest at *their* fireside.

In Sylvie's disposition the two extremes which characterized the temperaments of her parents had been escaped; the tendencies she inherited from the one counterbalanced those imparted by the other, and a *juste milieu* was the happy sequence! In place of the vaguely wild hopefulness of her father, she possessed a cheerful confidence; and instead of being prone to her mother's ceaseless anticipations of evil, she experienced a placid preparation for disappointment, as very possible, and therefore very endurable.

Sylvie's feeble frame betrayed the ill effects of her constant confinement, and the unflagging diligence with which she studied. She grew thinner and thinner, and more and more pallid each day; and yet an incomprehensible strength revealed itself in the sweet sounds that woke beneath her attenuated fingers, and issued from her colorless lips—the strength of inspiration!

Her child-life had been grief; sorrow had quickly ushered her into womanhood; poverty and privation were familiar to her, and she felt them less keenly than her parents. The necessity of encountering the rude moods of her ascetic master was a far greater trial. She shrank from unkindness, she yearned for the fostering voice of encouragement and approval; but Maitre Beaujeu was niggardly of commendation, and her happiest efforts were only rewarded by a dubious growl. Far worse than this, he often attacked her mother, and unsparingly ridiculed her father's follies. At such times Sylvie's brave spirit was stirred to rebellion, she conquered her awe, took part in the wordy warfare, and boldly stood between her tutor and her parents, diverting the wrath of the former to herself, to shield those who were too fearful of his ill-will to resent his insolence.

When Sylvie's lesson was concluded, Maitre Beaujeu, instead of taking his departure, turned to the table, opened the old case that contained his violin, gently took out the instrument, and without comment sat down and played. There could be no surer sign that he was pleased with his pupil.

Sylvie crouched upon a low stool, resting her weary head upon her mother's knees. Her large eyes were fixed intently upon her master, and her whole soul flashed into her face; now and then a low murmur of ecstasy broke from her parted lips, and her slight frame quivered, as though with an electric shock.

The mother's hand softly smoothed her daughter's silken hair, and the habitual look of sorrow began to fade out of Madame de la Roche's wan face, as though it had been swept away either by that flood of melody, or by the contemplation of Sylvie's silent rapture.

The trio had not heard the opening of the door, and were unconscious that any one had entered the apartment, though close beside Maitre Beaujeu stood a tall and handsome man, boyishly jovial in appearance. His complexion was florid as that of a mountain maid; his fair hair clustered over a low, but exceedingly white brow; his large eyes were of a clear and very light blue; his rosy mouth seemed especially fashioned for smiles. Though his dress was shabby in the extreme, there was a certain degree of stylishness about his deportment which communicated itself to his attire. Perhaps his fine figure, broad chest, and rounded limbs, would have given an air of elegance to any apparel.

Maitre Beaujeu chanced to look up, and with a scowl, he instantly stopped playing, and laid his violin in its case.

"Go on, go on, Maitre Beaujeu," cried Monsieur de la Roche, in a lively tone; "finish that strain. It is really ravishing!"

"Thank you, I've played enough; too much, rather, for I like to choose my audience, and was not aware of the *honor* of your presence."

"Well, well, as you like," said De la Roche, good-humoredly; "we must not quarrel with one who has been such a friend to my little girl here. But, Maitre Beaujeu, when will you obtain her a hearing? Just at this moment I'm hard pressed for funds; our treasury is reduced to its last franc, and that confounded notary had no copying for me to-day. There's nothing left that can be transferred to the pawnbroker. Sylvie is our only hope. When will you get her a hearing? That's the question."

"In all probability, *never*," answered Beaujeu gruffly. "I see no likelihood of an opportunity. Possibly she'll carry her voice unheard to the grave. Plenty of voices quite as fine have gone there unrecognised, and more will follow."

"Ah!" sighed the mother, "that's just *my* belief. I brought *ill-luck* to Everard by marrying him, when I might have done so much better and married a Marquis, only my evil stars would not permit it; and now there's nothing but poverty and misery before us."

"Very convenient, to lay your own bad taste and

Monsieur de la Roche's improvidence to the charge of the *stars.* What have the *stars* to do with your making a bad choice, and his squandering his fortune, and rendering his family destitute?"

Beaujeu snatched up his cap, and with the dear violin under his arm, shuffled out of the room, without paying the least attention to Monsieur de la Roche's attempt at self-defence.

CHAPTER II.

A TOILETTE DILEMMA.

After Maitre Beaujeu took his abrupt departure, Sylvie made an effort to conquer her lassitude and prepare the frugal repast of her parents. It consisted only of soup, salad, and coarse bread, but the table was neatly spread, and, in the centre, she placed the tin cup with Mathieu's humble bouquet.

During the meal Madame de la Roche was silent, absorbed as usual in her own gloomy thoughts. Sylvie was too much exhausted to converse, but her buoyant-spirited father discoursed at length upon the various methods by which, if the Fates only smiled, he might rapidly make a fortune, and resume his former position in society. Year after year he had clearly demonstrated how this desirable object might be obtained; but the great wheel which was suddenly expected to turn, and send him upward with a bound, never seemed to move; and his airy castles invariably exploded, and left him, for a season, prostrate and disheartened. His wife, who had lost all faith in his intangible schemes, only sighed and shook her head, as she slowly sipped her soup; but Sylvie's filial respect caused her to listen with that attention which great talkers look upon as the most gratifying response.

The next day Maitre Beaujeu did not appear at his accustomed hour, and Sylvie, whom he would not have found slumbering again, looked for him with growing disquietude.

Her mother had several times declared during dinner, that she was inwardly troubled by strange and undefined misgiving; premonitions that evidently pointed at Maitre Beaujeu. De la Roche was unusually taciturn, and Sylvie found it difficult to preserve her wonted cheerfulness.

The meal was over; she had risen to clear the table, when, without knock of warning being given, the door flew open, and Maitre Beaujeu burst into the room. Maitre Beaujeu? The amazed trio could scarcely believe that it was really the grave music-master. He capered about, with his violin under his arm, flung up his cap and caught it, sang a jovial refrain, and made such mad demonstrations of hilarity, that no wonder Madame de la Roche shrank away in terror. Her husband, too, looked as though he were meditating the best means of capturing the lunatic; but Sylvie sprang towards him with outstretched hands.

"Oh! my master, what ails you? what is the matter?"

He caught her in his arms, hugging her and the violin in the same embrace; he kissed her forehead and cheeks almost frantically, and in a voice half laughter, half tears, shouted, "What is the matter? the matter? Child, *it has come! it has come! At last! at last!*"

"What has come, dear Maitre Beaujeu?"

In answer, he folded her anew to his breast; the violin still sharing the caress, and pressing against her slight frame rather more roughly than was agreeable. "Your trust was not in vain! The good God has rewarded your faith in his own good time!"

"What, then, has happened?"

"The chance for you to be heard has arrived—the opportunity for me to present a pupil before competent judges has come! Judges who know what music means—none of your new-fangled pretenders, but *true* judges."

Sylvie could not utter a single word; her hands were clasped, her eyes upraised with an expression of fervent gratitude. The next moment she burst into tears and hid her face upon the old man's shoulder.

"Maitre Beaujeu, my dear friend, it's just what I expected!" exclaimed De la Roche, with an odd kind of dignity, and repressing all surprise. His demeanor conveyed the impression that he was only receiving his deserts, and could not be elated by an event which he had the right to anticipate. "Let me assure you, my dear sir, that this was what I always looked for, and now all will be as it should be! We shall be obliged to hire decent apartments at once, and get a few comforts around us, and I don't doubt that Christmas will find me driving that noble pair of greys which I have so long desired to possess. I have a strong partiality for greys—I shall not consent to buy horses of any other color. But I don't doubt that we will easily find a pair to suit!"

Maitre Beaujeu's unwonted tenderness vanished.

"You don't doubt, don't you? Then let me tell you, sir, I *do doubt*. The card-houses you are such an adept in building will tumble down as fast as they went up, and the greys will run away with your reason before you ever hold their reins. That's your '*luck*,' you know; so your wife says, and she has secret information from the abode of the blue devils!" Saying this, he pushed Sylvie rudely from him. "What are you playing the fool for? What are you crying about, making yourself look uglier than ever? It's a great misfortune you have no beauty to part with!" The musician turned again to De la Roche, and asked, tauntingly, "What if I *have* obtained a hearing for her, who says she'll succeed?"

"Ah! who indeed?" responded Madame de la Roche, woefully. "It's not to be expected."

"Certainly not, Madame, you're quite right; your *unlucky stars* will occupy themselves in taking care to prevent success," returned Beaujeu, ironically. "Therefore, it is not a matter for such *very* great rejoicing; though I this very evening obtained permission for her to sing at a charitable concert, to be given at the residence of the Count Castellane."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Sylvie. "My dear master, how did you accomplish anything so wonderful?"

"It was no doing of mine, it accomplished itself—it was a *chance* that turned up!"

Sylvie shook her head. "*A chance?* No, it was——"

"*Stuff!* I've heard all that before; you don't believe in *chance;* but a *chance* it was, and a *chance* of which I had the wit to take advantage. The Princess Clementine has promised to honor the Count by her presence, accompanied by several members of the royal family. The Princess had signified her desire to hear Lablache, the great basso, in the celebrated duet from Semiramide, which you and I have often sung together. Mademoiselle Belle-Chasse, who was to sing the female part, has been taken ill. A couple of hours ago I encountered Monsieur Le Grand, who has charge of the concert. He usually gives me the cold shoulder, having nothing to gain from such a poor devil as I; but to-day he was in great distress; he had not succeeded in finding a contralto voice sufficiently reliable to supply Mademoiselle's place, and it seemed probable that the duet would have to be omitted. The Princess had only consented to be present to hear Lablache in this piece; to withdraw it would be highly prejudicial to the success of the concert. Le Grand condescended to ask my advice. I told him that one of my pupils possessed a magnificent contralto voice, and sang the Semiramide brilliantly; and you'll prove my words! else I wash my hands of you! Le Grand knew that he could trust me; he may sneer at my worn-out coat, he may despise my poverty, but not my musical knowledge. So the matter's all settled! Settled! Do you hear that? Settled!"

Maitre Beaujeu seemed inclined to resume his joyful capering, when the voice of Sylvie's father once more revived his habitual churlishness.

"Settled! *settled!*" he repeated, rapturously. "Then it's all right! just as I thought, and we are quite safe!"

"I say you're *not* safe!" almost shrieked Beaujeu, more savagely than ever. "Who knows that she wont be frightened out of her wits before all those grand people, and lose her voice? And there's little enough time for preparation. I've half a mind to make you sit up all night and practise that duet."

"When will the concert take place?" asked Sylvie.

"When? The day after to-morrow, to be sure; only two days for preparation."

"Two days!" cried Madame de la Roche, dolefully. "Oh! it's impossible! How shall we get her ready? How shall we make her a dress to wear? And how shall we ever buy her the dress, to say nothing of shoes, and stockings, and gloves, and a sash, and a handsome handkerchief?"

"Don't talk to me of dresses, woman!" replied Beaujeu. "What has a dress to do with her voice? These women are such torments! It's always to some stupid trivialities they attach importance. It don't matter what she wears. Let her be clothed decently—that's enough."

"That's just the trouble. How are we to manage to clothe her *decently?* Besides the dress she has on she has only one other—her *best*, and that a shabby mousseline-de-laine, faded and darned, and three years old. You know nothing about these affairs, Monsieur Beaujeu; but I, her mother, say you could not take her among ladies and gentlemen in a mousseline-de-laine dress three years old, and very much the worse for wear."

"No, I fear not, my master," Sylvie responded.

"Here's a tempest in a teapot! Here's an insurmountable barrier to what I have been working to accomplish these three years, and all raised by a woman's gown! Instead of rejoicing at this unexpected good fortune, instead of being out of your senses with delight at the honor of singing with

Lablache, and before some of the royal family, you make a mountain of difficulties out of a dress! The style of her costume, I suppose, won't alter the quality of her voice?"

"No, no; of course it won't," said De la Roche; "but you know the gentle sex are prone to dwell a *little too much* upon outside show; they must be pardoned, my dear sir, for this very natural weakness. Sylvie will do you credit, and herself credit, and us credit, and redeem our fortunes, no matter what dress she has on! People won't look at her old mousseline-de-laine, nor at her sallow little face, when they hear her voice. A new dress is quite out of the question; we have not a sou left to buy one—we cannot get it on credit—and there's nobody we can borrow from, so that settles the question of the dress. Sylvie will make a hit, and she'll soon have dresses in abundance. We will robe her like a queen! And I rather think her mother's wardrobe and mine will require considerable replenishing. I should not like to say how long I've worn this coat."

As the father complacently uttered these words, Beaujeu walked up to him, almost threateningly.

"Sir, I'll not say what I consider you; you know less even than your wife and daughter. You talk unmitigated nonsense! Your daughter will not be introduced to the public by me, unless she is properly attired; and since you cannot provide her with a dress——"

"And with shoes and stockings, and gloves, a sash, and a handsome handkerchief," broke in the mother.

"And with shoes and stockings, and gloves, a sash, and a handsome handkerchief," scornfully echoed Maitre Beaujeu; "and since all these absurdities are needful to a woman's toilette, down tumbles your card house, as I said it would, for she will not sing at the Count Castellane's concert."

"Just our luck!" cried the mother. "The most glorious opportunity in the world offers, and we lose it for want of a few louis-d'or to buy a dress!"

"Who says you lose it!" thundered Maitre Beaujeu.

"Why, she cannot go *without* a dress," returned the mother, with a faint flash of spirit; "and we cannot purchase one; where are we to pick up the sixty or seventy francs, which it would cost to procure a suitable toilette? I do not think we could even get the dress made in time, if it were lying here at this moment, and we could not pay for any one to make it; so it's all over!" And Madame de la Roche folded her hands with a resigned, give-up sort of expression, and drew a deep sigh.

"Since the dress seems to be an insuperable obstacle, and an absolute necessity, perhaps you could help us?" suggested de la Roche to the music teacher, nothing daunted, for it was not easy to dash his hopes.

"I? No, sir, no! I have not the means. Not that I would throw the money away in buying girls dresses, if I had. I expended my last louis-d'or this day in paying my poor mother's confounded doctor. I have not a franc left; no, not a sou."

Sylvie, who had been standing musing, now laid her hand gently on his arm, and said: "My dear master, *what is to be done?* We must make an effort; this opportunity must not be lost; a plain dress of some kind must be procured, and must be made, and in time. I do not see the way, but I *do* see that it must be done, and that we have not a moment to lose."

"She monopolizes the sense of this family as well as its talent," ejaculated the master. "You are right, Sylvie, it must be done; but *how* it is to be done I cannot divine any more than yourself. The articles they say you need cannot be purchased without gold, any more than your dress can be made without hands. If I had the money, you should have it; I tell you I have *not* got it, and I cannot borrow it; so my good intentions will not help you."

"But Maitre Beaujeu——" began the father.

"I've no time to listen to any of your sublime projects, sir. I dare say you'll fabricate her a dress out of your fine words, and make it up by the aid of the same airy materials. She's not likely to have the honor of singing with Lablache if you do *not ;* so I leave you to make the experiment."

In spite of a detaining ejaculation from Sylvie, he bolted out of the room.

Sylvie and her parents, or rather Sylvie and her father, sat down to discuss possibilities and feasibilities; and after he had raised her hopes many times, and tantalized her by all sorts of plans, which her mother systematically tore to pieces, proving the fragility of each scheme, Sylvie withdrew to her own little chamber, if we may so call the nook partitioned off by the old curtain.

There she knelt down to pray, that if it were well, the way might be shown to her by which this apparent good, so unexpectedly presented, could be rendered available; and though no method suggested itself to her mind, she rose up, comforted by the certain conviction that the desired means would be revealed, *if it were best;* and, if not revealed, it would be because the step, which promised so largely, would, if taken, prove a false one.

CHAPTER III.

MAITRE BEAUJEU'S VIOLIN.

SYLVIE slept little that night, but as the grey light of morning stole into her humble chamber she rose, and went quietly about her usual duties—arranged the apartment, prepared the breakfast, and carefully made the coffee, upon which her parents chiefly depended for refreshment. She moved about with a mien as composed as if this first great venture in life had not been missed—though she had little doubt that it must be foregone.

On opening the door to receive her daily supply of milk, she encountered Maitre Beaujeu passing hastily through the entry, with his beloved violin under his arm. Sylvie started to see him at this early hour, for he was habitually a late riser, and often owned his fondness for the pleasant morning nap—that sweet semi-conscious slumber which is too light to be haunted by troubled dreams, too deep to be disturbed by waking anxieties. Sylvie remarked that the musician's face was far paler than usual—it looked positively cadaverous. He was too much abstracted to perceive her until she saluted him; then his features worked convulsively, and, with an agitated air, he muttered:

"Go in—go in. I don't want to see you!"

"But, my master," began Sylvie, beseechingly, and advancing towards him.

"Don't come near me, little owl; you look hideous this morning! Don't speak to me, I say; I'll not hear a word. There's your chamber door open, and I tell you if I should catch a glimpse of that silly mother and weak father of yours—or if I even heard their voices—I could not answer for my own resolution; so get into your room, will you? Shut your door, and don't molest me!"

For once Sylvie seemed inclined to disobey, but he waved her off, and rushed down the stairs.

"How strangely he looks! What can ail him?" she murmured. "He never goes out at this hour; he has no lessons to give so early in the morning, yet he had his violin! Perhaps he could not sleep, after the dreadful disappointment of last night, and has gone to wander about until the hour for his first lesson arrives. Ah! no one gives him credit for possessing the kind heart that lies hidden under his rough exterior. He would not speak to me because he had not courage to allude to this severe trial to us both. Yet I should have told him that I could bear it patiently, hopefully; other chances may come as unexpectedly as this one came—who knows! And perhaps I should only fail if I sang at a concert with so little preparation; that must be the reason why I am prevented from making the attempt."

Thus this trustful, calm-spirited young maiden consoled herself as she returned to her labors.

Breakfast consisted only of bread and coffee, and was soon over; Sylvie and her parents had partaken of the meal almost in silence. Her mother looked positively ill, from the absence of all rest during the night; and her father, whose states of high excitement were usually followed by fits of dejection, was now painfully depressed. In these moods he seldom talked, but Sylvie knew how much he suffered when he silently kissed her forehead and departed to seek occupation; for at that moment he was wholly out of employment.

As the door closed after him, Sylvie turned caressingly to her melancholy mother, stole the needle she was mechanically threading out of her hands, and entreated her to lie down and try to sleep. Madame de la Roche, who really felt unable to sit up, made but feeble opposition to her daughter's wish. In a few moments she fell into a profound slumber. Sylvie did not venture to open the piano for fear of rousing her, but took up the piece of sewing she had coaxed out of her weak hands, and sat down by the open window.

Without the casement stood the small pot of mignonette, one of Mathieu's humble offerings. The summer air, passing over the flowers, carried their delicate aroma into the room, and Sylvie smiled involuntarily as she inhaled the perfume. That odorous breath was a pleasant and hopeful messenger. Those flowers grew in obscurity, were gazed upon only by the eyes of poverty, yet they absorbed the bright sunshine, and drank in the rain, and blossomed and gave out the sweet odor with which they were endowed; their gift of fragrance was not *wasted*, for it often gladdened her and her sad mother, who had so little gladness in their lives. Would Sylvie's own gift prove more valueless than that of a lowly flower? The humble blossoms seemed to answer with their sweetness: "No—this *scent* for *us*, and that *voice* of melody for *you*, and *both* for some *use*."

A bang at the door, which flew back as if it were kicked open, broke the mother's slumber. She sprang up, with a faint cry.

"No piano going? all quiet? Have you fallen asleep again, lazybones?" exclaimed Maitre Beaujeu, noisily entering.

Sylvie rose and was about to explain.

"How do you expect, at this rate, to be ready with the Semiramide to-morrow night—eh?"

"To-morrow night!" cried Sylvie, joyfully.

"Yes, to-morrow night, parrot! Are you not to sing in a duet with Lablache, at the Count Castellane's, to-morrow night?"

"Am I, truly?"

"Truly you are; and if you don't sing *true*, I've done with you for ever."

"But the dress?"

"I hold it in the palm of my hand."

"And the shoes, and stockings, and gloves, and sash, and handkerchief?" chimed in Madame de la Roche, as she sat upon the side of the bed.

"All in the same small compass,—see!" and he caught Sylvie's hand, and closed her slight fingers over four gold coins;—three louis-d'or and a half.

"Oh! my master! my master! how shall I ever thank you! How have you done this?"

"What's that to you? *It is done;* that's enough. It will buy what you need to make you presentable; won't it, little fright? It won't make you handsome, but it will let the people hear a voice that is worth all the beauty in the world. It's enough,—is it not? I consulted my mother; she understands these feminine matters, and according to her calculations there is a dress, and all the other silly paraphernalia, in those four bits of gold."

"Oh! there's much more than enough—a deal more, I'm sure," replied Sylvie, whose tiny hand had never before held such a treasure.

"But how is the dress to be purchased, and cut out, and made up in time? It is quite impossible. And who is to make it? *I* can't cut a dress in any modern fashion, and Sylvie knows nothing of dress-making. Here's a dress and no dress-maker! We're just as far off from good fortune as ever!" groaned Madame de la Roche.

"And you will always keep far off with your eternal croaking!" angrily answered Maitre Beaujeu. "You are so determined to make difficulties, and see nothing but the dark side, and be fond of nothing but trouble, that you deserve nothing else. Yes, you know you *are* fond of it, or you would not seek after difficulties so pertinaciously."

"Maitre Beaujeu, you must not speak in that manner to my dear mother," answered Sylvie, seriously. "I am sure, mother, that I have found a way of getting the dress made; it came into my head as I was pondering over possibilities last night. That good Ma'm'selle Ursule, who lives in the story below us, is a mantua-maker. I heard her say she had very little work just now. I am confident she can make my dress by to-morrow night, with your help and mine."

"*Yours? yours*, indeed? And what is to become of your practising?" cried Beaujeu. "Let me see you dare to thread a needle, even, and I'll burn the dress in an instant."

"Let us buy it first—just to enable you to do that," replied Sylvie in a merry tone; "only grant me time to speak to Ma'm'selle Ursule, and to make the needful purchases (for my mother is so much indisposed this morning that she cannot go out), and then I will faithfully practise for the rest of the day. When you come this evening, you shall see what progress I have made."

Sylvie threw her shabby mantle over her shoulders as she spoke, tied on her old straw bonnet, and was hastening out of the room, but stopped suddenly, and went up to Maitre Beaujeu.

"Oh! how selfish and thoughtless I am! I do not pause to tell you how grateful you have rendered me! I do not ask you what sacrifice you have made to obtain this money, and I am sure you have made one. *That* was your errand out so early this morning. Tell me, my master, how you borrowed these seventy francs."

"Chatterbox, get away, will you? What business is it of yours? What have you to do with my private affairs? Let me hear no more impertinent questions."

Sylvie saw that her master was in earnest. He nervously pulled at his moustache, and his mouth twitched as though he were affected by some unpleasant recollections.

"Then I will only ask if you will be here at the usual time this evening!"

"I intend to come two hours earlier; so, be ready."

"But your pupils?"

"I shall give no lessons to-day." Maitre Beaujeu cleared his throat with some violence, for his voice was husky; then he took from his old horn-box a large and consolatory pinch of snuff.

"No lessons? Why——"

"Do you intend to stand there chattering all day? Do you intend to forget all about that dress, without which a girl can't make music any more than a harp without strings?"

"I am going; adieu, mamma."

Sylvie ran gaily down the stairs, and the music-master retired to his chamber.

As Ma'm'selle Ursule had passed her prime, and was still unmarried, we are compelled to designate her as an old maid. She was a brisk, bright, soft-hearted creature, who took almost as much interest in the young as though they brought back her youth, yet felt as great sympathy with the aged as though she had always been old. Indeed, she seemed ever ready to enter into the joys or sorrows, the hopes or schemes of others, partly because any intercourse with the world interrupted the monotony of her existence, and partly because she was naturally unselfish.

Sylvie was her chief favorite, though she saw her but seldom. She had long been acquainted with the object of the musical education the young girl was receiving from Maitre Beaujeu, and Sylvie's present communication filled her with delight. She engaged to commence the dress with all speed, and in a few moments was ready to sally forth to make the needful purchases.

Ursule did not lack the good taste which is characteristic of her countrywomen. She selected for Sylvie's attire a simple white muslin. If the means at command had permitted, it would have been a very fine instead of a rather coarse muslin, but no richer material would have been preferred.

Sylvie listened in astonishment while the shrewd spinster quarrelled about the price, and beat the shopkeeper down sou by sou. At last the bargain was completed, and the dress secured for forty francs. What an enormous amount it seemed to Sylvie! The same process of cheapening had to be gone through over the stockings, which were bought for two francs, and it was vigorously repeated when the sash, gloves, and the handkerchief were chosen. Six francs were paid for the sash, two and a half for the gloves, and eight for the handkerchief. Five francs more were expended in what mantua-maker's style "sundries," leaving but six francs and a half. A shoemaker had next to be visited, and Sylvie's slender foot, when it was encased in a neatly-fitting satin slipper, looked as though it were an inheritance from Cinderella. All Ursule's arguments and entreaties could not obtain the pretty slippers for less than six francs, which left just half a franc out of the seventy Maitre Beaujeu had supplied.

Sylvie was astonished; she had no conception that what seemed to be a little fortune could melt away so rapidly, and apparently without being the result of any extravagance. Only half a franc over! and how was she to pay for the making of the dress? But when she expressed her concern at this deficiency of means, Ursule answered laughingly——

"I don't eat my kind! I would not take payment from one as poor, or poorer, than myself. You will owe me nothing."

Madame de la Roche revived a little as Sylvie displayed her purchases, and when, soon after, Ursule entered the room, armed with thimble and scissors, and other mantua-making implements, the poor invalid was stirred by a pleasant excitement which had been unknown to her for years. Very quickly the white muslin was cut and fitted, and the two elder women were seated in a corner chattering like magpies; and Sylvie was at the piano drowning their dissonant voices in a torrent of melody. Such was the disposition of the group when Maitre Beaujeu entered. He gave a contemptuous glance at the feminine finery scattered about, and answered Sylvie so gruffly, as she remarked upon his early arrival, that Ursule was speedily awed into silence.

By and by, she discovered that she had lost the measure of Sylvie's girdle, but it was some time before she could summon courage to approach her, and make a frightened attempt to pass the tape around her slender waist.

"What are you doing there?" demanded Maitre Beaujeu, sternly. "Do you suppose I am going to have my lesson interrupted by any of this foolery?"

Ursule retreated rapidly, and sheltered herself by the side of Madame de la Roche. Sylvie gave the mantua-maker a comical glance, without hazarding a remark, and demurely went on with her lesson. It was closed by her tutor saying:

"No more to-night; it will tire your voice, and we must have it fresh for to-morrow."

He spoke in so kind a tone, that Sylvie thought he would surely reward her by playing on his violin as usual. She rose and took her place on the little stool beside her mother's feet, her seat of rest; but Maitre Beaujeu had his cap in his hand and was departing.

"Will you not play for me to-night? Why, where is your violin? I never saw you without it before."

Sylvie had only then noticed the absence of his inseparable companion.

"What business is that of yours?" replied Beaujeu, tugging fiercely at his moustache. "Have I not the right to do what I please with my own?"

His manner, and the agitation apparent in his voice, betrayed him. Sylvie sprang to his side, almost falling over the white muslin which entangled itself in her feet.

"Oh! my master, the dress! the dress! your violin. I know! I know!"

Maitre Beaujeu made a movement to repulse her, and tried to deny that her surmise was correct, but fairly broke down, and hid his confusion in repeated pinches of snuff.

"If you had not parted with your violin, I should not have had that dress to wear to-morrow! But your violin that you were so fond of—you have not sold it? Surely, you would not do that?"

"No, no, Sylvie; I could not have done that for any one, hardly for my old mother. I did not think I could have done what I have done, yet there was no other way. I took the violin to a pawnbroker's, close by; it was like parting with an only child to give it up! I loved it better, I think, than I could love a child. I could not bear any one to touch it—I charged the man not to handle it——"

Sylvie interrupted him with more feeling than strict politeness: "Will they pay me to-morrow, if I succeed?"

"Pay you? No, indeed; there was not a word said about payment. You are only singing on trial. Besides, it is a charity concert, and the musicians volunteer their services."

"Then they will not give me anything, and I shall not be able to get back your violin?"

"You certainly will not. If you are wonderfully successful, the count may possibly present you with some little token of regard, that's often done, but it will be nothing that can put bread into your mouth, or redeem my violin—so don't build castles with your father's style of masonry. Go to bed early—rest, and let me see you fresh in the morning and looking your best—your *least* *ugly*, I mean. I shall be here soon after breakfast. Remember, no curving your chest in with sewing. I'll not have you take a stitch upon that nonsensical dress?" and he pointed disdainfully at the white muslin as he left the room.

His exit opened the floodgates of Ursule's talk, and how she ran on! Sylvie could not listen; she was thinking of the old man's violin.

Shortly after the music-master retired, Monsieur de la Roche entered, looking very low-spirited, but when he beheld the breadths of white muslin scattered about, Ursule's needle flying, and his wife's keeping it rather lagging company, while Sylvie prepared supper, his spirits went up like a sky-rocket. He discovered forthwith that he had all day experienced a presentiment that he would find the whole affair settled, and he was equally certain that before the year expired he would drive that noble pair of greys in the Bois de Boulogne.

CHAPTER IV.

LAUNCHED.

SYLVIE had never beheld Maitre Beaujeu more nervously irritable than on the morning of the eventful day when her powers were to be gauged before the tribunal of public taste. Now, he declared that she sang as though her heart were ice and her voice frosty air; anon he complained that she exaggerated; she was too florid, too fiery, too dramatic. When she became embarrassed by these unusual criticisms, he charged her with affectation and wounded vanity. Heretofore in his instructions he had never alluded to the absence or presence of emotion, but had developed her magnificent voice and perfected her fine ear, as though he ignored that they were instruments for the soul's melodious expression. She had been wholly unconscious of the depth of feeling that often found utterance upon her lips. Its manifestation was unpremeditated and untutored. Maitre Beaujeu's pitiless chiding now inspired her with a strong dread that he had overrated her talents, and her heart sank until she grew deadly sick, and then it seemed to mount into her throat and stifle the swelling notes. This was the first time that her noble organ had been impaired by the least approach to huskiness.

Maitre Beaujeu, in almost frantic amazement, ceased playing, to dive into his snuffbox, and, having nearly impeded his respiration with its stimulating contents, he sought comfort in torturing his moustache with tugs which threatened its total uprooting. He found further relief in roundly scolding Sylvie for her lack of composure, without once suspecting that he himself had destroyed her mental equilibrium.

The young girl made no reply, but her whole frame shook with repressed agitation.

"Premonitory symptoms of hysterics, as I live! I know the signs and foresee what's coming?" cried the teacher, scanning her with indignant glances. "If we are to be indulged with an hysterical farce to-night, I'm ruined! that's all!" and he doggedly closed the piano, and rose from his seat.

Sylvie strove in vain to choke down a sob.

Maitre Beaujeu responded to it with a fierce growl, and ordered her to sing no more that day, and not to weary herself with exertion of any kind, yet not to lie down for fear of clogging her voice, and not to eat except very sparingly—then hurried out of the room. The two last were most superfluous commands; she was a stranger to the luxurious habit of reposing when the sun was up; and the frugal fare of poverty was not likely to pamper her appetite.

The white dress was completed some hours before it was needed. Madame de la Roche sat beside the bed where it lay, smoothing out the folds, and mourning over the recollections it awakened of her happy maidenhood, when she had worn just such attire; while Ursule constantly interrupted her reminiscences by suggestions for the improvement of Sylvie's severely simple toilette.

"A little jewelry is really indispensable; it will keep people from suspecting that she is so *very* poor; have you no ornaments, no trinkets?"

As may be imagined, the answer was in the negative.

"And nothing to wear in your hair, Sylvie? Something bright might improve your looks."

"I fear not," replied Sylvie, quietly; "and I would rather not try the experiment. Maitre

Beaujeu would tell you that my looks are a hopeless case; and, to-day, my heart is hardly full enough of hope to contradict them."

The kind dress-maker was not satisfied. She went to her own apartment and hunted over all the humble treasures she had hoarded up for years. By and by, she returned with a *cache-peigne*, and breast-knot of scarlet ribbons, which she had herself worn, upon festive occasions, long, long ago,—before the snow of life's winter fell on her hair, and the chill of disappointment on her heart. She had also brought a large cameo brooch, the setting of very doubtful gold, and the cutting very undoubtedly execrable. Also a huge buckle, and a pair of very barbarous-looking gold hoops for the ears, which she declared would give great character to Sylvie's face. Sylvie's ears had been pierced in her childhood, but her juvenile ear-rings of bright red coral had long since been converted into bread.

Sylvie was very loath to wound her warm-hearted friend, but good taste prompted her to reject the grotesque-looking additions to her attire.

Ursule next insisted upon displaying her skill as hair-dresser—and what combing, and brushing, and braiding Sylvie's abundant tresses underwent! An hour was consumed in the task—then the fiery *cache-peigne* was fastened over those shining braids; and Ursule declared that her labors had produced a marvellous result! Sylvie glanced in the small mirror which Ursule triumphantly held up before her, and could not help admitting that her *coiffeure* spoke the exact truth; the effect of her handiwork was so "*marvellous*" that the young girl hardly recognised her own countenance; the mirror seemed mockingly to reflect some ludicrous caricature of the face she had been accustomed to see. When she involuntarily raised her hand to remove the hideous red bows, which covered not her hair only, but half her head, Ursule pleaded so hard that they might remain undisturbed, that Sylvie hesitated, and, rather than cause her zealous friend mortification, came very near relenting. Just then a timid knock called Madame de la Roche to the door. The hunchback stood without.

"They say Mademoiselle Sylvie is going to sing at the Count Castellane's to-night: she'll want flowers; all the grand ladies wear flowers. Ninette spared me these. Beg Mademoiselle Sylvie to wear them."

He handed the mother a small bunch of June roses, and hastened away.

The roses were just what Sylvie would have desired, had she been accustomed to wish for anything that seemed unattainable. The flaming *cache-peigne* was quickly discarded. The delicate-hued roses, with their vivid green leaves tastefully disposed among her glossy dark hair, gave to the arrangement of her head a picturesque effect that wonderfully improved her countenance.

The white muslin dress fitted her admirably. Sylvie's neck and arms lacked the beauty of roundness, but the artful dress-maker had only disclosed them beneath a transparent covering which concealed their thinness, without hiding the graceful fall of the shoulders, and the gentle curve of the youthful bust.

Ursule took up the mammoth brooch, with the evident hope of fastening it in Sylvie's bosom; but the latter smilingly frustrated her intention by placing one of the June roses in her breast. The brooch was relinquished and the huge buckle proffered; but Sylvie mildly set it aside, and arranged her white sash very neatly with a few unseen pins. The ear-rings alone remained, and

Ursule so pertinaciously urged their adoption, that Sylvie found it difficult to defend herself from being forced to assume the barbarous appendages.

In spite of her predilection for finery, and her discomfiture at the rejection of her precious gewgaws, when Ursule paused to contemplate the young singer, apparelled in virginal white raiment, with the June roses in her hair and on her bosom, she frankly acknowledged that any ornament would have destroyed the maidenly simplicity—the striking spirituality—of her appearance.

The hour at which Maitre Beaujeu had promised to call for his pupil was approaching. The Count Castellane resided in the Faubourg St. Honoré, at some distance from the lodgings of the debutante and her master; but there was no money left for the hire of a *fiacre*, and they were obliged to walk.

"What is Sylvie to wear over her dress? We have nothing, positively *nothing!*" exclaimed the mother. "This faded mantle of hers will never do, never! And I have only a worn-out, grey shawl. What *is* she to wear? And on her head, too? She has nothing but her old straw bonnet, and that is not only too shabby, but it would crush those flowers, and disarrange her hair."

Madame de la Roche had discovered a new difficulty and it really seemed as though, through habit, she seized with avidity upon each fresh obstacle. Before she had ceased speaking, Ursule was out of the room.

In a few moments she reappeared, with a somewhat rusty black silk mantilla on her arm.

"There! there's something quite respectable. I've worn it these ten years, on Sundays and holidays, but it has always been in fashion, and no one can turn up their noses at black silk—it's always genteel."

"But her head—what for her head?" cried the mother.

"Well, for her head I do not think I can arrange quite so nicely; we have to manage about that. I have no sort of evening head-gear, for I don't go out at night; I have no one to accompany me," she added, with a little sigh. "A hat is out of the question, or I might lend her my green silk bonnet, with the scarlet poppies, but it would not do; so I've brought this for a substitute, and we must make it answer."

As she spoke, she flung over Sylvie's head, and fastened lightly under her chin, a very old black veil, of imitation lace, carefully darned here and there, yet not without rents, which there was no time to repair.

"There! it's charming! Quite Spanish in its effect, I declare! And it won't press upon the flowers. I assure you it don't look at all out of the way. In some countries veils are always worn in the streets. To be sure, people don't fasten them on just in this style; but what does that signify?"

Maitre Beaujeu now made his appearance, looking more quaint than ever in the full dress suit which he had preserved for so many years, that it had a come-out-of-the-ark sort of cut and air.

"What? you're ready, young one? That's right—I like punctuality. I hope we are to have no hysterics? There! don't begin to look frightened; we won't talk about such stuff. We must be off, for it is a long walk, and if you are hurried or flurried to-night, your voice will suffer."

"Can you not wait a moment or two, to give her father a chance of seeing her?" besought Madame de la Roche. "He said he would be home in time, but he had some copying engaged for to-day, and I suppose he could not get through as early as he intended."

The very possibility of Monsieur de la Roche's appearance was enough to speed Maitre Beaujeu.

"No, no, we are going this instant!" And he snatched Sylvie's hand away from Ursule, who was fastening her glove. "Let's be off! and carry that nightingale safely in your throat, or you and I will both be undone to-night."

"Oh! don't mention it!" sighed Madame de la Roche, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "It's just what I expect."

"Then, begging your pardon, you're a—a—I won't say what you are!" answered Beaujeu, bluntly. "Don't you suppose I know what I'm about? Do you imagine that I would risk *my own* reputation, and with such a pompous fellow as Le Grand? Come, let's be off before I get into a passion."

How those words, rude as they were, consoled and encouraged Sylvie, who had been struggling all day with her doubts! She embraced her mother tenderly, saying—

"All will be well with me, mother; have no fear; my voice was not given me for nothing, and——"

"Is this sermon going to end soon?" shouted the impatient old man. "When did you turn preacher, scare-crow? Your voice was not designed for the pulpit but the choir."

Sylvie turned to Ursule, murmured her thanks, kissed her, and followed her master.

In quitting the room he nearly came in contact with Mathieu, who was watching at the door. Beaujeu lifted his hand to strike the boy, but Sylvie caught the upraised arm.

"Don't! don't--I wasn't doing anything!" cried Mathieu. "I only wanted to see Ma'm'selle Sylvie as she passed, and to know if she wore my roses."

"Yes, Mathieu, yes; I have them in my hair, and on my bosom." She hastily lifted her veil as she spoke, and threw back the old black mantilla, that he might see the flowers.

His look of beaming delight made her heart glow, and she thought, "What a simple thing can give pleasure to the *very poor*, *very humble*, *very pleasureless!* It is almost worth while being poor, to need so little to make one happy!"

The walk to the hotel of the Count Castellane was long, and Maitre Beaujeu preserved silence which Sylvie felt no disposition to break. At any other time she might have enjoyed the sight of the gaily illuminated streets, and the brilliantly lighted shop-windows, which she seldom beheld, but now she saw nothing save the clear blue sky, and the stars above her—thought of nothing but high purposes and heavenly aid.

They passed through a spacious court-yard, and the door of the stately mansion was quickly thrown open.

"Monsieur Le Grand, is he here? Has he come yet?" inquired Beaujeu of a domestic.

"I believe so, Monsieur."

"Have the goodness to show me to him."

The servant led the way to the library. By a table, poring over some leaves of music, sat a pompous-looking old man, attired in the height of the fashion. His dyed beard and hair lent no counterfeited youth to his deeply-furrowed face. He turned as the door opened. His air was unmistakably consequential and patronizing.

"Ah! Beaujeu, my friend, is that you? Glad you're early!" he exclaimed, in a condescending tone. "Is this the young person you thought competent to take the place of Mademoiselle Belle-Chasse, and fill that unfortunate hiatus, by singing with Lablache?"

He scrutinized poor Sylvie with a mistrustful expression, which increased the nervous trepidation from which she was already suffering; then whispered, still glancing doubtfully at her, "Do you think she is *really equal* to the Semiramide?"

"Monsieur Le Grand," answered Beaujeu, with a dignity which Sylvie had never before seen him assume, "I am no pretender—I am an artist, as you are yourself. I have never had your opportunities, or met with your success—all the worse for me; but I have *some reputation* to lose, and not having quite as much to spare as you have, my loss would be all the heavier if I committed a *faux pas*. I should not have recommended my pupil, Mademoiselle Sylvie de la Roche, were I not quite certain of her powers."

Sylvie began to wish that he had been less confident, or that he would speak with less certainty, and promise less, for cold shudders ran through her frame; she felt as though her voice were stifled, her blood frozen, and as if all her limbs had suddenly lost their sinews.

She could hardly help exclaiming, "Oh! my master, you have overrated me! I shall never be able to sing before an audience, especially if the people resemble this gentleman."

She turned to Beaujeu with the words surging up to her lips. One look revealed that he only preserved his calmness through a mighty effort; that his composure and his apparent faith in her success were assumed. The hand in which he held his old horn-box shook, and scattered its contents; he blew his nose violently, either to appear at his ease, or to conceal his countenance; and when that prolonged process was over, how the poor moustache was twirled and twisted and martyrized! Sylvie saw that he was, in reality, fearful of failure. Her downcast eyes rested on her snowy dress, and she thought of the sacrificed violin.

"I beg pardon, I did not mean to offend," said Le Grand, coldly. "I referred only to the extreme youth of the young lady. Her appearance made me question——"

Maitre Beaujeu interrupted him: "Monsieur, I did not tell you that her appearance was prepossessing. Did you ever see the plumage of a nightingale? Parrots and peacocks have gaudy feathers; but the nightingale carries divine music beneath a rusty coat of brown."

The performers of both sexes now began to pour in. Monsieur Le Grand saluted each in turn in the most courteous manner.

The ladies were robed in ball costume, and there was a lavish display of satins, brocades, embroidered tulle, flashing diamonds, artificial flowers, floating feathers, and all the accessories of the most elaborate toilettes. Sylvie's white muslin and June roses looked strangely insignificant and out of place beside their gorgeous attire.

As they threw off their rich mantles they cast upon her glances of disdainful surprise, and whispered to each other. The men looked at her hardly less rudely, turning away with a shrug which said, "She's no beauty!"

Maitre Beaujeu perceiving how Sylvie shook, almost forced her into a seat, and stood beside her chair, as though to shield her from the impertinence to which she was exposed.

Last of all entered Lablache. Monsieur Le Grand immediately presented him to Sylvie and her instructor. The latter was quite prepared for some expression of disapprobation when the distinguished basso beheld the lowly-looking substitute who had been chosen to fill the place of Mademoiselle Belle-Chasse; but Lablache hardly bestowed a glance upon Sylvie. It was a matter of very little importance to him in what manner she executed her share of the music; he regarded her merely as a necessary auxiliary to enable him to display his wonderful powers in a duet which had been ordered by a member of the royal family, as an express compliment to himself.

The tuning and trying of instruments filled up a long interval. At last Monsieur Le Grand, who had left the room, returned, and said, with emphasis:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you are all ready, have the goodness to accompany me."

Sylvie, as she perceived the general movement, rose from her chair, but the next instant sank down again. For a moment the lids dropped heavily over her eyes, and her naturally sallow complexion grew almost livid.

Maitre Beaujeu seized her arm and whispered, "Do you intend to disgrace me before all these people? For the love of heaven rouse yourself! You CAN if you WILL—I say you *must*—you *shall!*"

She slowly opened her eyes and regarded him with a vacant stare, as though she hardly comprehended his words.

"Sylvie, don't you hear me? Why don't you answer? See, they have all gone, and we shall be missed."

The room was by this time empty.

Maitre Beaujeu glanced over the programme he held in his hand, and whispered, "Courage! child, courage! your turn does not come for some time. You are fully equal to the occasion if you will only collect yourself. Courage, *dear child!*"

How kindly his voice sounded! Sylvie could not recognise the tone; and gentle words always had such power over her! They now seemed to communicate strength, to renew vitality, to quicken and exalt all her faculties. Nothing could have restored her more effectually than words of tenderness to which she was so little accustomed. She looked up and smiled gratefully, though very feebly; then rose once more, took the musician's proffered arm, and allowed him to almost carry her whither he would.

As they passed through the crowded hall, Beaujeu fortunately caught sight of Monsieur Le Grand's tall figure, and followed him at a distance, until they reached the *salon* which had been arranged for the performers. Upon a daïs, raised at one end of the apartment, stood various musical instruments, and a number of velvet-covered arm-chairs. As each performer mounted the platform, Monsieur Le Grand pointed out his or her place. Sylvie and her tutor he located in the least conspicuous position; if that term can be used where all positions were open to full observation.

But Sylvie saw nothing of the gaily-dressed spectators, and Beaujeu saw nothing but her. He was watching the strange flushing and paling of her cheeks; noting the whiteness of her quivering lips; the dilation of her large eyes, which gave her face a look of nightmare terror, as though she were praying to wake from some frightful dream.

The concert opened with the noble overture from the opera of "The Prophet."

Sylvie had never heard it before. At the first few chords she drew a long breath, as though the air, which was stifling her, had suddenly grown light and clear; her head turned involuntarily towards the performers, and her eyes were riveted upon them as if she took in the entrancing sounds by her vision as well as by her hearing.

A solo, duet, and trio followed; her attention seemed wholly absorbed, and her countenance glowed with delight.

Beaujeu held the programme in his hand, but did not address her until the fourth performance concluded; then he whispered:

"It is your turn now, child."

Monsieur Le Grand approached and offered her his hand.

Beaujeu did not dare to glance at her as she rose. Looking neither to the right nor left, he walked to the piano and took his seat.

A derisive murmur ran in and out among the musicians, as Sylvie advanced to the front of the platform; and Lablache took his place at her side, rapturously greeted by the audience.

The rotundity of his proportions, and the self-satisfaction, mingled with native *bonhomie* expressed in his countenance, contrasted strongly with Sylvie's slender form, *spirituelle* look, and the bending humility of her appearance. But she had ceased to tremble; she had a true passion, an absolute veneration for music; and the masterly strains to which she had been listening had stirred her inmost soul, and left its finest chords still vibrating. The audience had all faded from before her sight—her perfect *unconsciousness of self* gave her *self-possession.*

We pass over the effect produced by Lablache's exquisite vocalization, which never failed to create enthusiasm.

The very first notes, deep, rich, and clear, which issued from Sylvie's lips, took all ears captive, and caused a great hush. Her voice now gushed forth in a wild flood—now softly rippled and rolled in waves of liquid sound—now floated and melted away in silvery echoes. And again the wonderful metamorphosis which we have before described took place. Her blue eyes, no longer frightfully dilated, filled with lustrous dew, the elastic lips lost their bloodless pallor, and took the most bewitching shape—the sallow cheeks were dyed with the softest blush—the drooping figure rose erect, and gained a startling height and majesty—she looked the very muse of song incarnate!

Thunders of applause pealed around her at the close of the duet, but if she heard, she did not notice them, or comprehend that they were in any degree a tribute to herself.

The voice of Monsieur Le Grand, congratulating her, broke the spell by which she was bound. Then she understood that she had passed the ordeal, that she had triumphed! She gave him one look of almost amazed gratitude, and, unconscious of the staring crowd—unmindful of the time and place, turned suddenly to her master, threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears!

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin!" and the naturalness and spontaneity of the action elicited a tumultuous response from the sympathetic crowd. The clamor startled her; she lifted up her head and shrank away abashed.

Maitre Beaujeu, in spite of his own ill-concealed emotion, had enough presence of mind left to cover the awkwardness of her position, and re-conduct her to her seat.

Monsieur Le Grand shook him cordially by the hand, saying, "You have a treasure in your pupil, Monsieur; I wish you joy! You may well be proud of her triumph to-night, and look forward to her distinguishing herself. I claim a little share of the honor myself, because my esteem for you, my confidence in your judgment, has procured me the happiness of presenting her to the public."

Monsieur Le Grand, with his wonted shrewdness, foresaw that Sylvie's rare contralto voice, and the passion, power, and skill she had evinced, would render her a valuable addition to his corps, and by excessive suavity he hoped to efface the memory of his late mistrustful coldness. Beaujeu was only too ready to be flattered and conciliated.

A number of the performers had gathered around Sylvie, but her face was covered with her hands—she still sobbed uncontrollably.

"Really, Mademoiselle," said Monsieur Le Grand, "these should be tears of joy after your great success; but violent emotion will injure your beautiful voice. Your pupil is very nervous, Monsieur Beaujeu. You must be careful of her; I find excessive excitement very prejudicial to the vocal powers."

Poor Sylvie! "Tears of joy!" Yes, perhaps they were, but they were tears that had their source in want and suffering, and hope deferred that made the heart sick; for these had rendered her physically so weak that she had no control over her emotion.

The performance, which had been interrupted, now continued; Sylvie had only been engaged to sing in the duet with Lablache, and solely to enable him to be heard; but Monsieur Le Grand received a message from the Count, informing him that the audience desired to hear the young debutante once more. Maitre Beaujeu feared that Sylvie could not regain sufficient composure to do herself justice, and objected, though very feebly, for he was sensible of the compliment. Le Grand, who regarded the wish of the public as the law of an artist, would listen to no refusal; and Beaujeu, greatly perplexed, was forced to yield. He went up to Sylvie and took his seat by her side; she was still weeping immoderately.

"Sylvie, I never saw you cry so before; it is very wrong—very childish; it will harm you—you must cease."

No answer, but renewed tears.

"Sylvie, you do not know that your trial is not yet over; you have more to accomplish to-night."

Her hands dropped from her face with the start she gave. "More?" was all she could ejaculate.

"Yes, you must sing again."

"Oh, my master, impossible!"

"Possible, and to be!" replied Beaujeu, resuming his usual stern manner. "The sooner you collect yourself the better, unless you wish to neutralize the effect you have produced. I tell you that you are to sing again at the conclusion of the concert. You will sing that beautiful closing air from the Sonnambula, which I arranged to suit your voice."

Sylvie did not reply, but the shock communicated by this command checked the torrent of her tears. Maitre Beaujeu said no more for some time; and she sat still, looking almost petrified, so suddenly had she been calmed.

By and by, Beaujeu turned to her again: "Well, Sylvie, you will be ready?"

"I fear I cannot sing!"

"*Cannot sing* when the public requests it?" answered Beaujeu, this time with unaffected savageness. "If you are the public's servant, you must obey the public's orders; you must have no will, no pleasure, no indulgence of your own. That's the first lesson for you to learn, and harder lessons will follow. I tell you the audience demands it, and you *must* sing!"

Sylvie did not reply.

"Well, am I to have an answer? You *must* sing, I say!"

Again she thought of the sacrificed violin. The inward struggle caused her flushed countenance to become ashy pale, but she looked up and said, "If you command me, I must make the attempt. Have I much time?"

Beaujeu examined the programme. "There are two more pieces."

Not another word was uttered by either until the last song was concluded and Beaujeu silently offered her his hand. Monsieur Le Grand, however, pressed forward, and himself conducted her to the front of the platform. Then swelled loud acclamations from every side. She had created a sensation for which the audience had been wholly unprepared; the listeners were taken by storm. The atmosphere of mystery which surrounded her added to the charm. No one knew who she was, nor whence she came; but that she was a child of genius, was the unanimous verdict.

As the boisterous greeting struck on her ears, Sylvie gave a frightened glance around, as though she was seeking some mode of escape.

Maitre Beaujeu whispered "Sylvie!" in a tone of rebuke that recalled her to herself.

The glorious voice burst forth once again, as deep, and rich, and clarion-like as before, and Amina's joyful strain seemed the outburst of Sylvie's own internal happiness.

Never was rapture more eloquently, more

thrillingly made vocal. As the last silvery cadence died away, and before a conducting hand could be offered, she quietly returned to her seat. She had taken no heed of the enthusiastic plaudits—she was wholly unaware that an audience expect the stereotyped, smiling obeisance with which musicians recognise every noisy token of approval. But the evident unsophistication evinced by her ignorance of the usual, hackneyed style of receiving and courting public favor, increased the strong impression of originality which she had already made upon the delighted spectators.

Monsieur Le Grand was loud in his compliments to both master and pupil; and Lablache, with the generosity of a true artist, added his congratulations.

The audience had risen; the singers, too, were departing. The Count had come forward with several of his friends, and was standing by the steps of the platform. Le Grand rightly conjectured that this group of admirers desired to be presented to the successful neophyte. In making the wished-for introduction, he courteously included Maitre Beaujeu. Sylvie bowed with downcast eyes, and could not syllable a single word in answer to the eulogiums showered upon her. Maitre Beaujeu replied in her stead, with really surprising tact and self-possession; but, seeing that her confusion every moment increased, he somewhat abruptly bade good-evening, and led her away.

As they passed, the human stream parted and left a wake of murmured praises behind the twain. Once more in the library, Sylvie donned the shabby black mantilla, tied on the old lace veil; and,. though Le Grand was conversing in an earnest tone with his humble associate, she took Maitre Beaujeu's arm with an *empressement* which showed her anxiety to depart. Beaujeu saw that her strength was nearly exhausted, and hastily making an appointment with Le Grand for the morrow, conducted her into the hall; but was not destined to reach the street door as quickly as he anticipated.

A young girl who might have passed for the Titania of the *beau-monde*, so fairy-like was her form, so aërial her presence, left the gentleman's arm upon which she was leaning, ran up to Sylvie, and took her hand, exclaiming, "Oh, Mademoiselle, you have given us such true delight! I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed your singing!"

Sylvie looked up at the sound of the fresh, girlish voice, and there was something in the joyous young face which inspired her with confidence, and unsealed her lips.

"I am so glad!" she murmured; "but it was Maitre Beaujeu."

"Then we owe our thanks to him," answered the young lady's escort, bowing to the musician with a deference which showed that he could honor age, and appreciate talent.

"How pale and weary you look!" remarked the beautiful girl; "and how cold your hand is! Are you very tired?"

"I believe I am tired—I am so unaccustomed to——" Sylvie hesitated, not knowing how to finish the sentence properly.

"Then we ought not to detain you longer, though I waylaid you on purpose to make you stay and talk with us."

"Mademoiselle, you are very kind, and we are highly flattered," replied Maitre Beaujeu; "I fear my pupil, Mademoiselle Sylvie de la Roche, is more fatigued than she confesses. She is not strong, and we have some distance to go. We will therefore beg you to pardon us, and allow us to say good-evening."

"Goo-devening, then; but, Mademoiselle Sylvie (what a pretty name!), I hope to hear you sing often—oh! very, *very* often. Be sure I shall not forget you, and you must not forget me. Will you not wear this little ring to remind you of that compact?" she added, naïvely. "It is not worth presenting, but you will accept it and wear it for the sake of Honorine."

She drew from her finger a gold ring, holding a heart-shaped ruby in the centre, and placed it on the slender finger of Sylvie, who had removed her gloves, for they were saturated with tears. It was the first ring that had ever sparkled upon her hand.

The gentleman whom Honorine had given her bouquet to hold, selected a sprig of heliotrope, and, presenting it to Sylvie, said, in a tone of reverential admiration: "And will you not also accept this humble offering?"

"Mademoiselle — Monsieur," replied Maitre Beaujeu, in a somewhat stately manner, for he began to feel the importance of his position, "My pupil is much honored by your approbation; you will allow me to thank you for her. Once more, good-evening."

This time he succeeded in drawing Sylvie away, and they passed out of the door and down the steps, and were approaching the gate of the court-yard, when they heard a hurried footfall behind them.

"Have you not a carriage waiting, Monsieur Beaujeu?" asked the gentleman from whom they had just parted. "I thought that you seemed pedestrianly disposed. I must insist upon your using my carriage. Antoine, drive up."

Before Beaujeu could answer, the servant, obeying his master's orders, was at the gate, and the gaily dressed *chasseur* dismounted, and let down the coach-steps. The musician hesitated, but the young nobleman (for such the arms upon his coach-panels proclaimed him to be) handed Sylvie into the carriage in a manner which precluded all discussion. Maitre Beaujeu followed.

"Give your orders to Antoine, Monsieur Beaujeu. I wish you a good-evening."

Saying this, he withdrew, probably to save the music-master the mortification of naming in his presence some very humble locality.

The order to the Rue St. Denis, numero —, was given, and the horses started at a rapid pace.

"Oh! Maitre Beaujeu," exclaimed Sylvie, "how much I owe you!"

"You will repay the debt tenfold, child, if you continue to succeed; therefore gratitude need not oppress you."

"It does not—it is delightful to feel grateful. How my father will rejoice, and my poor mother! And Ma'm'selle Ursule, too,—she seemed so much interested. How bright all the world looks to me to-night! There is something exhilarating in the very air—something that mounts to my brain, and almost makes my head light."

"The soft pressure of the first roses of triumph," replied Beaujeu. "But they are not thornless, child—we cannot hope for *that.* One only feels the dewy leaves at first, but the prick of the thorns must also be experienced in time."

"Oh, doubtless, *in time, in time!*" exclaimed Sylvie, merrily; "but not *in anticipation!* for that would be to experience it once more than is necessary. My dear master, do you know who that—who the—who the young lady is who spoke to us?"

That was not precisely the question that rose to

Sylvie's lips, but she changed her query before it found breath.

"No; but she is exceedingly lovely, though so diminutive, and she had the bearing of a little queen—a veritable *Reine des Fées.* The gentleman who escorted her has a most distinguished appearance; the coat-of-arms on his carriage shows that he is a nobleman."

"They are very grand people, then? very grand and high people?"

"Yes, you may be sure of that."

Sylvie sighed involuntarily.

Maitre Beaujeu did not notice this inappropriate demonstration in answer to his assertion. His tongue was unloosed for the first time since Sylvie had known him; and he told her of the distinguished company he had played before in his youth; of the reverses he had met, owing to the jealousy and treachery of his associates, and perhaps to his own lack of ability to push himself forward; he dwelt with much pathos upon his trials, his depression, his struggles to support his aged mother, and he pictured the hopes that sprang into existence at the discovery of Sylvie's talent, and which now promised to become tangible realities.

The young maiden drank in every word, dreaming meanwhile of the golden future that might be in store for her needy master, if the bright auguries of this night proved prophetic. She had almost reared an air-castle over his head, which would have done credit to her father's ingenuity as a cloud-land architect, when the carriage stopped.

At the noise of the wheels, the *concierge* hastened to the door, but started back in amazement at the sight of a magnificent equipage, a coachman in rich livery, and a gorgeously-attired *chasseur*. What was her bewilderment when the steps of the carriage were let down, and Maitre Beaujeu descended, and carefully handed out Sylvie!

Old Dame Manot involuntarily crossed herself, as though she felt under the influence of witchcraft.

As Maitre Beaujeu passed her, hurrying Sylvie on, the dame could scarcely command breath to gasp out:

"Ma'm'selle Sylvie has had a great success at the concert, then?"

"Certainly," replied Beaujeu with his wonted brusqueness; "my pupil has achieved a signal triumph. Have the goodness to stand aside."

Dame Manot planted herself directly in their path.

Maitre Beaujeu tried to hurry Sylvie on, but she kindly held out her hand to the old woman, and said:

"Thank you for being glad."

"Who told you she was glad?" asked Beaujeu, sharply. "Do you suppose poor people are ever glad to see other poor people rising above them? She is more likely to hate you than to like you the better for your success. And as for rejoicing—bah! that's not human nature."

"Then, perhaps, it's angel nature," answered Sylvie, gaily, hastening up the stair; "and I think there's enough of the angel in good Dame Manot for her to rejoice at my joy."

"Angel nature! Bah! A pretty pattern of an angel!"

Sylvie was considerably in advance of her tutor. As she reached her own door, she nearly stumbled over a dark object that lay curled up close to the threshold. It stirred at her touch.

"Is it you at last, Ma'm'selle Sylvie?" asked Mathieu. "I must have fallen asleep, I have waited here so long. Have you triumphed? Is all well? Oh! tell me quickly."

"They say I have, good Mathieu. They say I did Maitre Beaujeu credit."

"And it was a grand place? And you wore my poor flowers all among the great people?"

"Yes,—I believe it was a very grand place; and I have the roses still in my hair—see!" and she threw off her veil and displayed the June roses drooping their heads among her rich braids.

But the June rose that blossomed in her bosom when she went forth, had been displaced, and there a sprig of heliotrope lay; but *that* she did not exhibit to Mathieu.

Maitre Beaujeu came panting up the stairs.

"Who is that? Little rascal, is it you? lying in wait for Mademoiselle Sylvie, as usual?"

At the sound of that voice Mathieu vanished.

"Good-night—go to bed at once, and rest!" said Beaujeu, as Sylvie was about to open her own door.

"Will you not come in to see how glad they will be?"

"No, they are sure to make fools of themselves, and I have abundant opportunities of beholding that exhibition."

Ursule was sitting with Monsieur and Madame de la Roche. At the sight of Sylvie's radiant face they all rose. Her father caught her in his arms.

"Victory! Victory!" he shouted. "She has triumphed! Did I not say she would?"

Ursule and the mother wept with joy, for though Sylvie at first was unable to utter one word, her silence was as eloquent as the most profuse language. When she had been tenderly embraced and congratulated by each in turn, she found voice to reply to her father's manifold inquiries, and then related the events of the evening. But when she described the gracious young lady who had placed a ring upon her finger, she wholly omitted to mention her noble-looking escort, nor did she allude to the odorous sprig of heliotrope he had so gracefully presented her with—perhaps the incident was so trifling that it had escaped her memory.

The rejoicing was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door, followed by the intrusion of Maitre Beaujeu's sour face.

"I say, you senseless people, unless you let that girl go to bed she'll be ill to-morrow, and there will be another downfall of Monsieur de la Roche's pasteboard houses. She's worn out, and has a fever at this moment. Look at the bright red spots on her cheeks! As her master, I order my pupil to go to bed at once, and command her to talk no more to-night. Sylvie, I expect to be obeyed."

"You shall be, my dear master; I do feel very much exhausted, and I am oppressively warm."

As she spoke her mother touched her hands and exclaimed, in alarm——

"Oh! they are burning! She'll have a fever, and perhaps die! Oh, dear! oh, dear! Good fortune never looks in upon us but to be scared away again! It will not stay to cheer us even for one night."

"No wonder! Your endless croaking would put anything pleasant to flight," retorted Beaujeu. "Give your daughter a cool drink, and let her go instantly to bed; and if she should feel inclined to sleep in the morning, let her lie still. There ought to be no more chattering here to-night. Go to your own room, Ma'm'selle Ursule."

Ursule, who was easily awed by the morose musician, very meekly stole past him, carrying on her arm her old mantilla and veil.

Beaujeu, as he withdrew, shook his head at Sylvie, repeating, "Go to bed! Go to bed at once!"

Her mother, whose fears were only too readily excited, urged the not unwilling Sylvie to obey.

The father talked on long after he retired, driving his magnificent greys for the greater part of the night, but the imaginary steeds and their fancied owner were now and then brought to a sudden halt by his wife's dolorous ejaculation, "Suppose she has a fever! *There* will be the end of all our hopes!"

Did we suggest that the flower worn in Sylvie's bosom might have escaped her recollection? That must have been an error, for the roses she took from her hair were left to wither, forgotten, upon her little toilette table, but the heliotrope was tenderly laid between the leaves of her Bible.

CHAPTER V.

THE RUBY RING.

An exhausting exertion that is pleasurable—that calls into play the capabilities of the spirit which, when they rise to the heights of genius, ever clamor for the outburst of action, usually leaves no lasting sense of prostration; and then, youth has wondrous recuperative powers. Sylvie rose refreshed the next morning, and free from every lingering trace of fever. Madame de la Roche, with trembling solicitude, felt her hands, and counted her pulse, over and over again; but she was forced to admit that the hands were cool and the pulse temperate, and that her daughter never looked so well or so happy.

The frugal breakfast was unusually prolonged that morning. Sylvie seemed serenely joyful, and her father boisterously exultant; while her mistrustful mother looked positively frightened when she caught herself sharing their gaiety.

Monsieur de la Roche would gladly have

remained at home all day, to talk over Sylvie's triumph, and lay plans for the future, but he had promised the notary to complete some important copying; and, besides, he longed to inform his patron that he might provide himself immediately with a new assistant, as fortunate circumstances would place his present copyist above the need of pursuing his humble vocation.

After her father had gone forth, Sylvie, instead of clearing away the breakfast, remained seated, contemplating her own hand as it lay upon the table before her.

"What ails you, Sylvie?" inquired the mother; "I fear you are fatigued, after all; you are only just beginning to feel it; that often happens, and the fever may come yet."

"Oh, no danger! Is it not pretty, mother?"

"Pretty? A fever? No, I think not. How wildly you talk! I really believe you are getting light-headed."

Sylvie laughed and held up her hand

"I never imagined it would be so pleasant to have a ring on one's finger. But the ring must come off! Though that kind young lady charged me to wear it for her sake, it must be put to a better use."

"What is the child talking about? She certainly *is* delirious. Part with your first token of public approval? Put it to a better use? Surely, you *are* out of your head!"

"The ring must bring back Maitre Beaujeu's violin. That violin is more important to my dear master than the ring is to me."

"But you do not propose to sell your ring?"

"No, only to exchange it for the violin. I think I know at what pawnbroker's Maitre Beaujeu left his instrument in pledge. I cannot form an estimate of the value of this ring, but it may possibly be worth the seventy francs Maitre Beaujeu raised on his old violin."

"But you cannot get the violin without Maitre Beaujeu's ticket. Don't you know that, simpleton?"

"I suppose the *ticket* will be required of me by the pawnbroker, and Maitre Beaujeu certainly will not give it up for the purpose of making the exchange. But I mean to try what I can do. Do you not remember Maitre Beaujeu said he went to a pawnbroker's near here? Let me go there with Ma'm'selle Ursule. I will tell the whole story to the person who has charge of the business; Ma'm'selle Ursule will testify to the truth of my relation; and I will plead so warmly that possibly I may get the exchange made."

"You will get *nothing* for your pains; but I suppose the only way to satisfy you is to let you try, and I am dreadfully afraid of a fever's coming on if you should fret. So, go, and try what you can do; but make up your mind not to worry because you are refused a very unreasonable request."

Sylvie quickly availed herself of her mother's permission to make the experiment. Ursule consented to accompany her, and they were soon on their way to the office.

It was some time before they could get any satisfactory answer to their inquiries; but, at last, the man to whom they applied, admitted that Maitre Beaujeu's violin had been pledged there. Sylvie showed her ring, and cupidity sparkled in his eyes at sight of the magnificent ruby. The ring was not only more valuable than the violin, but an article far more easily disposed of, if it chanced not to be redeemed at the specified time. Sylvie told her story with an earnest simplicity which was full of eloquence; but her listener, though strongly tempted, was unwilling to agree to the unbusiness-like arrangement of giving up the violin without the ticket. Sylvie pleaded with irresistible warmth. A long consultation between the partners ensued; at last the violin was yielded up and the ring left in its place, on condition that Maitre Beaujeu's ticket was returned before night.

Great was her mother's astonishment when Sylvie entered, carrying the violin (very much after the fashion that a young girl carries a baby), and laid it as tenderly on the table as Maitre Beaujeu himself could have done.

She had hardly arranged the room, taken her seat at the piano, and warbled a few notes, when Maitre Beaujeu's knock was heard at the door.

She cried out, "Enter!" without looking round.

"Ah! little owl, up and playing the nightingale again? That's well! that shows you have more stamina than your looks imply. But—what's this?"

He stopped immediately in front of the table.

"What is it? why, your violin, my master," answered Sylvie, demurely. "Do you not recognise your old friend? In return for it, will you just be good enough to hand me the ticket the pawnbroker gave you? It's mine."

Maitre Beaujeu was not listening. He had opened the case of the violin—he was looking at the precious instrument; he took it up—he almost hugged it; his breast heaved tumultuously—a sound like the rushing of waves issued from his lips, as he drew the bow across the strings, which responded as with a voice of their own to his emotion.

Sylvie stood beside him, too respectful and too much touched to break the silence.

But her mother, who anticipated an explosion of wrath, exclaimed: "Sylvie did it! I told her she had better not; I told her it was no business of hers; but the wilful girl would have her own way."

"How did she obtain possession of my property? How did she *dare* to meddle with my affairs?" asked Beaujeu, recovering himself, and in his roughest tone. "Those villanous pawnbrokers! How could they have the hardihood to entrust what was mine to another, without my order? I shall go to them at once! I'll teach them a lesson!"

"You will not do anything so wrong, my dear master," answered Sylvie, quietly. "*I* am the only one to blame. Was I not right to repay my debt the very first moment that I could?"

"But you could *not*—that's the difficulty! What means of repaying it had you?"

Sylvie did not reply; she was intimidated by the severity of his look.

"Do you intend to answer me?"

"*You* had a violin—it was *your* sole valuable. I had a *ring*—it was *my* sole valuable. *You* gave up your violin for *me*. *I* gave up my ring for *you*. Surely the barter is a fair one, and simple enough; there's nothing very wonderful about the transaction."

"And do you suppose *that* is the use you are to make of the gifts bestowed upon you by high people? Do you know to what consequences this may lead? Do you know what will be thought of you, if you do not wear the token of esteem which a young lady of rank has conferred upon you?"

"I *shall* wear it, Maitre Beaujeu, by and by. I hope to redeem it. Do you forget that a new path is opened to me? thanks to your unwearied instructions; and that I shall be able to earn my bread?"

"How confident we have grown all of a sudden! One swallow does not make a summer. There is a vast difference between one night's triumph and the steady maintaining of your position."

"Ah! there it is!" ruefully responded Madame de la Roche. "I said we were all rejoicing too soon—crowing before dawn. Sylvie's just like her poor father, takes everything for granted, and has found a fortune if she picks up a sou."

"You almost make me wish she might never find anything that would rob you of the satisfaction of perpetual whining!" snarled Beaujeu.

"Maitre Beaujeu, my mother——" began Sylvie.

"There, there! that's enough about it, child. I am going to give back the violin at once, and to get your ring. I suppose two can play at that game."

Sylvie's countenance changed; she looked not sad merely, but hurt, and answered with a dignity that became her well:

"Of course, you will do as you please; but it will wound me deeply. I have no right to dictate to one who is so vastly my superior. I am your debtor in all senses of the word; but, if you would allow me the pleasure of feeling the first faint foreshadowing touch of an independence which I may hereafter obtain, you will keep your violin and give me the ticket, which I have promised to carry to the man who, through my representations, gave up the violin against his better judgment."

Beaujeu looked at her steadily for a moment, and if he did not smile, it was because he *would not;* there was a smile lurking in his eyes which he forced away from his hard lips. He took a long pinch of snuff, and replacing the box, drew out a little old, discolored pocket-book, deliberately selected the ticket, threw it on the table, seized his violin, turned on his heel, and, without a word, left the room.

When Sylvie and Ursule presented themselves again at the pawnbroker's, the sight of the ticket gave evident relief to the person whom Sylvie had argued into an irregular proceeding, which might have entailed unpleasant results. Sylvie now received a ticket for the ruby ring that had been left in pledge, and departed well pleased.

Maitre Beaujeu returned some hours later. Sylvie at once remarked the satisfied air with which he took a seat, laying his violin on his knees, and resting his hands upon the case.

"I have seen Monsieur Le Grand. I had an appointment with him, which I have just kept."

"Yes? I am glad!"

"How do you know there is any cause for gladness."

"Your eyes told me; they talk faster than your tongue, my master."

"You will oblige me by not consulting my eyes, then; it's not decorous conduct for a young girl. Monsieur Le Grand has offered you an engagement! You don't look in the least astonished!"

"I knew it before."

"That is not possible. How *could* you know it!"

"Your eyes told me *that*, too. They are great tell-tales."

"Do you want to put me into a passion with your impertinence?"

"Sylvie, my dear, *do* behave reasonably. You don't know what might happen, if you *did* put Maitre Beaujeu in one of his rages," broke in the mother.

Beaujeu had seated himself with his back to Madame de la Roche, who was sewing as usual at the window. He now wheeled abruptly round so as to face her. He was evidently on the point of giving vent to some violent outburst, but Sylvie laid her hand gently on his arm; the soft touch and her look of entreaty melted him. Without uttering a syllable, but with a great gulp which seemed to swallow down many words, he wheeled round again.

"Monsieur Le Grand has offered us an engagement," remarked Sylvie, by way of taking up the thread of discourse.

"That's right, child; say *us—us!* He *has* offered *us* another appearance," replied Beaujeu, proudly. "He has either thought it time to recognise my ability, or policy has induced him to show me some deference on *your* account. He has requested three songs from you, of my selection, and a solo on the violin from me. The concert, for which he is now making arrangements, is to take place at the *Salle Ste. Cecile*, not at a private house as before."

A light shadow passed over Sylvie's face at the last words. Of what was she thinking? Why would she have preferred to sing again at the Count Castellane's?

"Le Grand has the whole management, including the payment of artists."

"And he proposes to pay us?" asked Sylvie.

"Two hundred francs!" answered Beaujeu, with ill-affected coolness.

"Two hundred francs? That's immense!"

"No, it's very moderate remuneration. But you are a novice, and have yet to earn celebrity. One is paid for *reputation* rather than for positive *talent.* Of the two hundred francs, one hundred will be yours."

"No, no, indeed! That would be unfair. Have you not instructed me for three years? My share must be very small; I will only receive enough to supply the immediate wants of my parents. The rest rightfully belongs to you."

"Am I to expect henceforth to be schooled by you? Are you to set up your judgment on all occasions against mine? I see you have plenty of spirit that will come out by and by, and play the deuce with us. I tell you I will make what agreement I please, and you will consent to it, whether it please you or displease you. Am I not master, and are you not my pupil? Perhaps you desire to change places? or you would like to have some other master to deal with?"

"Can you think I could so forget what I owe you?"

"The first thing you owe me is *obedience*, and *that's* a debt I advise you to pay. Since we've settled that matter, now let us select the three songs."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND STEP.

The week that intervened between her first and second appearance as a singer, did not pass very smoothly with Sylvie. The constant presence of her volatile father was not merely an interruption to her studies, but his frequent wordy collisions with Beaujeu discomposed her, and kept her choleric master in a state of most distressing excitement.

De la Roche was in such exuberant spirits—he was so confident that Sylvie's talents would speedily realize a large income—that he would shortly be restored to his former position in the social world, and—glorious anticipation! that he would, ere long, actually drive that superb pair of greys which were always careering through his brain, that he grew more reckless and improvident than ever. The few francs per day which he had an opportunity of earning, seemed a sum too petty to be considered. To receive them would, he thought, be a positive humiliation; and, in a stately manner, he declined to undertake any further copying for the notary! He now passed the larger portion of his time at home, commenting on his daughter's studies—vociferously applauding her brilliant execution—rallying his wife upon her low spirits—sparring with Maitre Beaujeu, and communicating to every one who entered his princely projects for the future.

Ursule flitted in and out of the room at brief intervals, always shrinking into some corner, or stealing noiselessly away when Beaujeu made his appearance.

Mathieu, uncured by the musician's rough treatment of his propensity to hearken by stealth to sweet sounds, never passed the door without lingering to listen; and, as Sylvie's voice threw its witching spell around him, he often sank down enthralled, and with his head resting against the door-panel, became oblivious of his errand, forgetful of his wants, his cares, his misery, until a well known step dissolved the enchantment, and put his visions and himself to flight.

Dame Manot, the *concierge*, who, ever since she had seen Sylvie descend from a splendid carriage, had paid great court to the De la Roches, and gossipped about them incessantly, made continual visits to their apartment, accompanied by curious friends.

De la Roche received her with pompous condescension, and amazed the good woman by his florid description of the mode of life he proposed shortly to lead, and his enumeration of the sumptuous adornments of the abode he was busily preparing—*in his imagination.*

Unluckily this troublesome father had made up his mind not to forego the pleasure of witnessing his daughter's next triumph in public, and upon that point he was immovable. He coolly made known his determination to accompany her to the *Salle.* This privilege Beaujeu refused to allow, and even threatened to give up his instructions, and the engagement altogether, if De la Roche persisted in his intention. Then Everard proposed to *buy* a ticket, and if he had possessed, or could have borrowed, the requisite amount, it would have been expended in this purchase, and that while the sweet singer herself almost lacked food. At last, Beaujeu, tired out by these persecutions, procured from Monsieur Le Grand a complimentary admission, which he presented to De la Roche, on condition that he absented himself from his lodgings during the day. The bargain was easily made, and so great was the father's joy at the possession of the ticket, that he may be said to have "worn it next his heart;" and certainly he drew it forth and gazed upon it tenderly hundreds of times, besides exhibiting it to every acquaintance whom he encountered, during the three days that elapsed before it could be used.

The evening came. Sylvie was clad in the simple, snowy raiment she had before worn. She had no means of replacing the white kid gloves, which had been completely ruined by her abundant tears; but the thoughtful Ursule had provided her with another pair, stinting herself for a week after for the pleasure of indulging in this helpful generosity.

Mathieu had not forgotten a meet tribute to the Saint Cecilia of song, at whose shrine he worshipped so devoutly; his offering was a bunch of lilies of the valley; and the pure, white bells, drooping among Sylvie's jetty hair, increased by contrast the beauty of the flowers, and of the silken tresses upon which they reposed.

Beaujeu artfully advised De la Roche to present himself at the doors of the *Salle* some time before they opened, that he might secure an advantageous seat;—his real object was to get him out of the way as soon as possible. The *ruse* succeeded admirably; the impatient father acted so promptly upon the hint that, after solitarily pacing up and down before the *Salle Ste. Cecile* for an hour, he headed the long *queue*, which, according to French custom, forms the crowd at an entrance into an orderly double file—no one person pressing before another who arrived earlier.

De la Roche's effervescent spirits forbade all reticence, and he soon entered into conversation with the persons who surrounded him. After the opening of a few general remarks, he confidentially informed them that he had a daughter who was to sing that night! He dwelt with enthusiasm upon the genius she evinced, and upon her success at the Count Castellane's recent concert; then branched off in his discourse, and favored his listeners with a sketch of his ancestry and his own early history—gave them an account of his wealth and his losses, and finally communicated his conviction that his fortunes were now to be redeemed by the daughter whom they were about to behold.

Wrapped once more in Ursule's foxy, black mantle and old veil, Sylvie walked with her master to the *Salle* in the *Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.*

The little retiring-room appropriated to the singers was a rather comfortless apartment, but Sylvie felt more at home there than in the Count's elegant library. Monsieur Le Grand had saluted her and Beaujeu, when they entered, with marked courtesy, and his example was followed by such of the performers as were present at her *débût.*

The arrangements were, of course, different from those in a private house. The musicians only appeared when, according to the order indicated by the programme, it was their turn to sing or to play.

Sylvie was perfectly composed, and apparently absorbed in the duty to be discharged. She sat beside Beaujeu, now and then exchanging a few words with him, until Monsieur Le Grand gave her his hand to lead her forth. It had not occurred to her master that she should be instructed to return the greeting of the audience by an *obeisance*, and she walked directly, though calmly, to the front of the platform near the piano. There were many persons present who had already heard her sing, and noisy as was their welcome, it was unnoticed by the young vocalist.

Monsieur Le Grand whispered to her: "You have forgotten to courtesy, Mademoiselle; courtesy, if you please!"

Sylvie looked up in his face with surprise, but supposing that he meant her to courtesy to him, made a modest reverence.

The quickness with which the audience comprehended this little by-play—divined what Le Grand had whispered, and how the unsophisticated girl had misinterpreted his words, was surprising. A good-humored and very general laugh, mingled with plaudits, resounded from every side; but Sylvie, far from being conscious that she had committed any error, inwardly congratulated herself that she had so quickly acted upon Monsieur Le Grand's hint.

"*O Mio Fernando*," from Donizetti's opera of *La Favorita*, was executed with artistic skill, depth of feeling, and vocal power rarely equalled. One great charm of her singing was the absence of all effort, the flowing forth of the delicious sounds as though they involuntarily rolled from her lips. The tumultuous bursts of delight which rent the air when the last mellow notes faded into silence, did not seem to reach her ears. From the moment she commenced singing, her countenance wore an abstracted dreamy look, as though she had risen to some sublimer sphere, and was unaware of all that passed in the region below her.

It was quite useless for Monsieur Le Grand again to suggest the propriety of a courteous acknowledgment; he led her back to the retiring-room without a word, and regardless of the uproarious demand for an *encore.*

"You sang charmingly, Mademoiselle de la Roche," he then said to her, "but you quite forgot to salute the audience."

"Salute the audience! Oh! I beg pardon; I did not know that I had anything to do with the audience," answered the novice.

Those artless words drew forth little gushes of suppressed laughter from her associates of the hour.

"Yes, little stupid," said Beaujeu, coming to the rescue; "you must courtesy when you appear before them, and courtesy when you retire, but I will not allow courtesying at every demonstration of favor; that is a shocking Italian habit in the worst possible taste, and does not suit your purer style."

As he spoke he darted spiteful glances at several of the ladies, who were still giggling in their handkerchiefs, and whom he had beheld soliciting fresh rounds of applause by a ready bending of the knee at the faintest sound of approval.

Monsieur Le Grand, who heard, shrugged his shoulders, and converted a spontaneous grimace into a conciliatory smile. He thought it better not to interfere with the eccentric pair. He had remarkable skill in feeling the public's pulse, and knew that Sylvie's very freshness, and unaffected ignorance of forms, added to the potent charm of her marvellous vocalization.

When she appeared again she did not forget the important salutation, and the marked manner in which she courtesied seemed archly to say:

"If I did wrong before, I hope I am atoning."

Such, too, was the ready interpretation of her action by the spectators; and her perfect transparency increased her fascination. But while she was singing "*Voi che sapete*," from Mozart's "Figaro," her recent tutoring was wholly effaced from her mind; and, at the close of the air, she was gravely walking away, when some recollection seemed to strike her. She started, hesitated, came back a step or two, with, "Oh! I forgot!" plainly expressed by her countenance, made her little, untaught, rustic courtesy, and tripped away, followed by a whirlwind of rapturous acclamation.

Even the bombastic Le Grand smiled almost laughed.

Before Sylvie sang the third time, her master was to execute a solo. Maitre Beaujeu took unusually long to tune his dear, sweet-toned violin; but he would have flown into a rage if any one had dared to hint that he was at all ruffled. When he rose, Sylvie followed him, and begged that she might stand where she could hear. Beaujeu stationed her a few steps from the entrance to the stage, where she was screened from view. But, as the music grew more and more stirring, it seemed to draw her magnetically forth; little by little she unconsciously advanced, bending forward to catch every sound. She did not see the audience—she did not know that any one saw her—but stood, rapt and statue-like, almost breathlessly listening, while all eyes were riveted upon her. The hearty tokens of pleasure that echoed on every side, when the strain ended, were awarded as much to the affectionate enthusiasm of the pupil as to the masterly skill of the tutor.

She remained as motionless as one transfixed, until Beaujeu approached her, in making his exit. His surprised "What are you doing here, child?" first made her aware that she was standing in presence of the crowd. She drew back, aghast, striking in the suddenness of her retreat against Monsieur Le Grand, who chanced to be standing behind her.

He accosted her, laughingly: "Mademoiselle de la Roche, your appreciation of your master does you as much honor as your devotion to your art."

"*Di tanti palpiti*," composed for Pasta's glorious contralto voice, had been selected for Sylvie's last effort that night; and, startling as her vocal achievements had been before, *this* was her crowning triumph. Monsieur Le Grand was obliged to consent to the *encore* which was vociferously demanded; and, even after the request had been complied with, found it difficult to quiet and satisfy the enraptured and excited auditors, who appeared determined to hear the air for the third time, and not to allow the performance to proceed in regular order until they were gratified.

That Sylvie was able to sustain herself was now an incontestable fact. That she must take rank with the first singers of the day appeared to be a sequence which nothing could now prevent. That Monsieur Le Grand entertained this opinion, was evident from his deference towards her, which every moment augmented.

The concert was over. Sylvie and her master had only made a few steps in the street, when her quick eyes distinguished two persons approaching, that made her heart give a great bound. That tiny, graceful, nymph-like figure, and the stately form by its side, had too often risen before her mental vision not to be instantly recognised.

"We are more captivated than ever, Mademoiselle Sylvie. I am sure the great Pasta never sang '*Di tanti palpiti*' more triumphantly," said Honorine. "You have not forgotten me, I hope?"

Honorine had taken Sylvie's hand—it trembled nervously at the touch; Sylvie was thinking of the ruby ring with a sickening fear that its absence from her finger might be detected. She remembered all Maitre Beaujeu had said about what might be thought of her parting with the ring, and knew she could not defend herself. Despite the thrill of joy that ran quivering through every vein at this encounter, she was impatient to hasten away, and could not command her voice.

"Those clouds yonder look threatening," remarked Honorine's escort; "you must allow us to take you home."

Sylvie made a faint effort to decline this offer, but Beaujeu thought of the likelihood of her taking cold, and the chances that her voice might be affected by hoarseness, and answered promptly:

"You are exceedingly good, Monsieur. We will accept your offer; for a cold would be a terrible calamity just at this moment."

"It would be, indeed," replied the nobleman, handing Sylvie into the carriage; "one that would fall upon us all."

Honorine leaped lightly in, and the gentleman followed. The former chatted merrily to Sylvie as the carriage was on its way to the Rue St. Denis, and the young singer was gradually lured into unembarrassed responses. It was too dark for her to distinguish the faces around her, and that circumstance helped to banish her diffidence. The gentlemen conversed with each other, and the nobleman gave Maitre Beaujeu his opinion of the concert as a whole, and of individual performers, not forgetting the solo on the violin, and proving by his discriminating criticisms that he was a fine judge of music.

Sylvie had become quite at her ease with her aristocratic companion by the time the carriage stopped. Maitre Beaujeu was nearest to the door; he got out and turned to assist his pupil; but the nobleman sprang down the steps, and courteously handed her out himself; then, without once glancing at the humble locality, re-entered the coach.

Dame Manot flew forth at the sound of the wheels, and various lodgers put their heads out of doors and windows, to see if it really was little Sylvie brought home in a grand carriage; and we fear that some of them dreamt dreams that night about renouncing their own humble vocations to turn their attention to music, as the easiest means of rising in the world.

The delighted *concierge* caught Sylvie enthusiastically in her arms; but this familiarity exasperated Maitre Beaujeu, who almost tore her from the good woman's hearty embrace.

As he bade Sylvie good-night at her own door, he ordered her to go to bed at once. The command, however, was not obeyed; for, naturally, she had to relate the occurrences of the evening to her mother and Ursule.

Very soon her father burst upon the trio, and incoherently poured out the history of his adventures. He repeated the flattering remarks he had overheard, the congratulations he had received when it was known that he was Sylvie's father; told of the whispers that flew from one to another, until quite a large circle was cognizant of the fact; and described his efforts to elbow his way through the crowd that he might accompany his daughter home, and his perfectly furious struggles to reach her side, when he saw her enter a superb carriage, which some of the spectators recognised as the equipage of the Marquis de St. Amar.

"The Marquis de St. Amar!" ejaculated Sylvie; "and the lovely little lady who was with him—did you hear who she was?"

"Oh! that was Madame la Marquise, of course. I think I heard some one call her so. It was a great honor for her to bring you home herself, but nothing more than we had the right to expect."

Sylvie grew suddenly pale, and stammered out: "I fancied she was too young to be married; and she was so girlish and frank, it never occurred to me—I could not have believed—it does not seem possible——"

None of these broken sentences were finished. She appeared to be lost in thought, and was too absent to hear her father's questions. When he chided her jestingly, mingling his light rebukes with kisses and praises, she pleaded fatigue, and begged leave to retire to her chamber. A moment before, she had declared that she was not in the least degree tired, and felt as though she could sing all night; but we suppose there is no exception to the rule that pronounces women capricious, since one brought up in such seclusion, and so little indulged as Sylvie, evinced caprice.

CHAPTER VIII.

REACTION.

Sylvie tossed restlessly on her couch that night, oppressed by troubled dreams. When she woke, with a start, her thoughts were confused, an indefinable weight pressed upon her spirits, and she felt haunted by a strange, vague sense of disappointment. Though the dawn had broken, and it was her custom to rise before the sun, she only gazed wearily about her, and sank again into an unquiet slumber.

Why was it that one visionary shape stood uninvoked before her, in all the vividness of actual presence? In reality, she had hardly looked into that face, yet she distinctly remembered every feature; the deeply-set, luminous hazel eyes; the expansive, intellectual brow; the waving, chestnut hair, so fine and soft that it appeared thin, and threatened early baldness; the well-cut nose; the too strongly defined curve of the mouth, which gave an expression of coldness and *hauteur* to the countenance, until the lips parted with a smile;—she recalled, too, how suddenly the frost melted beneath the glowing warmth of that smile, and the entire visage was lighted up with a winning softness, wholly opposite to its dominant character in repose.

Almost all young maidens picture to themselves a *beau-ideal* of manhood, for which, as their journey through life progresses, they zealously search. Sylvie had seen few gentlemen—we might almost say *none;* never before had a word been addressed to her by one whose noble bearing even slightly approached the demeanor of the Marquis de St. Amar. Was it unnatural that her girlish imagination should have found a *beau-ideal* unsought? He was the husband of the fairy-like being whom she only knew as "Honorine;" but what had that to do with Sylvie's admiration? Did she not experience as much, or even more, for his wife? It was the type of man and woman by which she was fascinated. Wherefore should she feel disturbed?

She sprang out of bed, as though in rising she could escape from her own tormenting reflections; she found herself singularly weak; she staggered back, and sank again upon the couch. Her hands were burning, her lips and tongue parched; she longed for a glass of water, yet had not strength to seek it, and would not venture to disturb her mother; or, rather, would not run the risk of exciting those ready fears by which the latter was so easily tantalized.

After suffering for some time in silence, Sylvie made another effort, and began slowly to dress. The very weight of her clothes seemed too great for her to bear; her limbs trembled, and surrounding objects danced and swam before her eyes; still she forced herself to continue her toilette. The cool water, which she greedily drank, could not quench her thirst; but, after she had dashed a quantity in her face, she felt somewhat refreshed. Nerving herself to conceal her languor, she lifted the old calico curtain and passed into her mother's room.

It was late, and Madame de la Roche had prepared the breakfast—a duty which always devolved upon Sylvie. The latter tried to speak in a cheerful tone, but was very thankful to her father for monopolizing the conversation; and she was still more grateful when he took up his hat and went forth, without noticing her fagged look and the unusual flush on her cheeks. He was impatient to relate to his quondam employer, the notary, and any other friends whom he could find, the events of the night previous, and to descant upon the brilliant prospects they heralded.

The weary girl, though she longed to lie down again, had too much consideration for her mother to yield to this inclination, and mechanically opened the piano. Her hot hands had no power over the keys; her voice, when she tried to sing, was tremulous; and dark, floating mists passed before her eyes, until the very lilies which she had taken from her hair the night before and placed in the little tin cup that stood on the shelf above the piano, grew black as she gazed at them.

"Mother," she said, at last, without turning, and supporting her throbbing head on her hands, "did not M'am'selle Ursule say yesterday that it was necessary for me to have another dress before I appeared again in public? Perhaps she is right; and if I sing again soon, as I hope I shall (a strange foreboding made her shudder and pause, but she rallied), we had better lose no time. I am a little tired to-day; too tired to sit long at the piano. May I not pay Ma'm'selle Ursule a visit, and talk over this important affair of the dress?"

"Yes, of course; you will have money enough to purchase something handsome; that is, if Maitre Beaujeu pays you, as he promised to do. But are you tired? It quite frightens me to hear you say so!"

"Is it not natural, mother, after my sitting up so late, and going through so much excitement and exertion?"

"There it is! There it is! Excitement and exertion you will never be able to stand! I thought so from the first. I told your father so, but he would not believe me. You will break down, and then it's all over with us!"

"Pray, mother dear, don't put such an idea into my head. You cannot think how the very suggestion troubles me."

Sylvie could scarcely repress her quick-springing tears. She wept readily, for she had never known trials tinged with bitterness that cannot find relief in the heaven-sent boon of tears. She had never known the despairing anguish that dries up tears. She had never known the hidden grief that teaches us to control our tears, while they drop inwardly like molten lead upon the scalded heart.

"I am only tired, mother," she answered, trying to conceal her brimming eyes, "and perhaps it would do me good to talk a little, to *gossip a little*, Maitre Beaujeu would say, with Ma'm'selle Ursule. May I go?"

"Yes, yes; though I hope you are not growing vain and commencing to attach importance to your appearance. If that is the case, the next thing you will be looking down upon us, as many a child who rises above her parents has done before. I confess that is a sorrow I am not prepared for."

"Nor shall you ever have need to be, mother. I am sure I have given you no cause to imagine that I could ever be so unfilial, have I?"

"No, no—*not yet;* but we never know what sad stroke is coming!"

Sylvie was unable to reply, but kissed her mother, and trying to command her faltering feet, and walk with her usual light, firm step, left the room. In the entry she paused; she felt as if she could go no further. As she leaned against the wall she caught sight of Mathieu, who, probably, had been hovering about her door.

"I am so glad you are there, Mathieu; I feel so tired this morning! I do not want my mother to know how tired—it would alarm her. I am going to refresh myself by chatting with Ma'm'selle Ursule. Will you give me your arm to help me down the stairs? It is very stupid of me to be so weak!"

It would not be easy to depict the emotion of the poor boy at being called upon to render this slight assistance to one whom he regarded with idolizing reverence. Until that moment, the miserable hunchback had never felt in his own person the superiority of manhood over a weaker sex; but as he supported Sylvie he experienced a glow of manly pleasure, and his crippled frame rose erect, as though, through the might of this new sensation, it could cast off its deformity.

They reached the mantua-maker's door; he knocked, and Sylvie was joyfully admitted. The next minute she sank, overpowered, into the arms of the kind-hearted old maid; told her how ill and exhausted she felt, and begged her to do something to strengthen and restore her, without disturbing her mother. Ursule tenderly made her lie down upon the bed, loosened her clothes, then prepared her a cooling drink, talked to her soothingly, bathed her hot temples and burning hands, bound a wet napkin on her brow, and in a very short time saw her fall into a sweet slumber.

"There! she has found the best restorative! Sleep is worth a whole doctor's shop of medicines!" said the sympathizing dress-maker, as she softly took out her work, and sat down to watch her patient.

Sylvie slept for a long time undisturbed, and did not even hear the knock at the door, nor her master's rough voice, exclaiming: "Where's that little runaway? Flown from her cage, I hear above. I suppose she is growing lazy after her triumph, and moreover is going to trouble us with her *airs;* so her wise mother up-stairs predicts."

Ursule beckoned him into the room without speaking. She was always rather nervous about addressing him, and merely pointed to the couch.

"Is she ill? Do you think she is ill?" gasped Maitre Beaujeu.

"Very feverish and weak, and worn out, but I trust not ill. She will wake up much better. Her skin is cooler already," and she gently laid her fingers upon the thin hands that were folded upon Sylvie's bosom.

Maitre Beaujeu bent over her with a tenderness it was not easy to imagine him capable of experiencing. Yet, possibly, there was a dash of selfish-ness mingling with the compassion and anxiety expressed in his face. If, by the cultivation of her genius, his hand had opened an arena to the child of poverty and misfortune, wherein she could win laurels that were golden, and earn fame that was wealth, had she not done the same for him? And now, were the shining gates of this bright future suddenly to close against both, because of her lack of strength to keep them open?

"A fragile casket to hold such a gem!" he ejaculated, half to himself; then turning to Ursule, added, "I comprehend why she came down to you. That mother of hers will worry her life out with tiresome fears and predictions; it's cruel! it's abominable!"

They stood for awhile in silence. Suddenly Ursule remembered to offer her guest a chair. He took it, and seated himself at the foot of the bed. Ursule resumed her work. Neither could have told how long Sylvie slept, for both had fallen into deep reverie. At last the slumberer stirred; her lips moved, as though they were about to sing, but only one low note escaped them; the sound or the effort awakened her; she opened her large blue eyes and gazed in wonder at her master, then turned to Ursule.

"You have had a good rest, child," said Beaujeu. "Are you better? Do you feel refreshed?"

"Much better; how good it was of you, Ma'm'selle Ursule, and you, my kind master, not to wake me. How late is it?"

"Some time past noon," replied Ursule, looking at the shadows upon the wall, by which she could always tell the time in the absence of the luxury of a clock.

"So late! What will my mother think? She will be terribly frightened. I must go back at once."

She raised herself and slid off the bed; but as her feet touched the ground, the floor for an instant seemed floating away from her, and she clutched the bedclothes for support.

"Let me fasten your dress and smoothe your hair," said Ursule. "There! that will do. Now drink a little more of this lemonade."

Sylvie drank eagerly, for her thirst was still unslaked.

"I intend to go up with you," remarked Beaujeu, in a decided tone; "not for a lesson; I will not allow you to sing to-day, you are too weak; but I must talk with you about future plans. I would rather remain here, and converse; but your mother will get one of her tantrums unless you make your appearance as soon as possible."

"Thank you for thinking of her——" began Sylvie.

"No need; it was *you* and your comfort I was thinking of; I know what a pandemonium she can make of her apartment when she conjures up her blue-devils, and gives them possession of the chamber."

As they were going, Sylvie remembered her errand. "It was about my dress that I came to consult you, Ma'm'selle Ursule. You said I must not wear my white muslin again, just yet. My mother wished me to ask what change you advise."

"Say that I advise a plain white silk, which will become you amazingly, and will be very useful hereafter; for with skill and taste we can transform it into a number of dresses. An over dress of crape, or tulle, or tarlatan, or trimmings of ribbons, or flowers, or velvet, will vary it charmingly. Don't forget that I am ready to accompany you to purchase the dress whenever you choose. It had better be made up at once."

Sylvie took her master's arm in ascending the stair; but perceiving how heavily she leaned, he encircled her waist to support her better. She looked up gratefully, and then, with child-like confidence, laid her head gently on his shoulder.

Affection was inexpressibly sweet to her. A single touch of kindness warmed her to the heart's core, strengthened her when she was most weak, gave her new life when vitality seemed exhausted.

As might have been expected, Madame de la Roche was both alarmed and indignant at her daughter's prolonged absence. She was on the eve of going in search of her. Sylvie begged pardon, and, without mentioning the slumber by which she had been refreshed, delivered Ursule's message about the white silk dress. Madame de la Roche approved the selection; *if they could afford it*, she added, glancing meaningly at Maitre Beaujeu.

He answered the look with a scowl, and seemed inclined to replace the old pocketbook which he had taken out; but a glance at Sylvie dispelled the evil prompting.

"Monsieur Le Grand paid me this morning, Sylvie. There is one hundred francs—your share."

He laid five glittering louis-d'or in her lap.

"I feel as though I had no right to so large a portion," she said, hesitatingly.

"You will not find it too large if you have white silk dresses to purchase. I don't intend to give you a lesson to-day."

The mother groaned audibly, and muttered to herself, "No lesson? Now he'll begin to neglect her, and she'll soon forget all she has acquired."

Beaujeu heard, but went on without heeding the ungracious remark.

"You have not yet learned what Monsieur Le Grand desires. I am in treaty with him for something *permanent;* we have not come to terms yet. Le Grand *wants us*, so it will not do to seem anxious. There is to be a concert of which he has charge at the Duke ——, in the *Faubourg St. Germain*, next week. We are engaged. Meantime I will not have you fag yourself out; you want rest, and fresh air, and a generous diet, a bit of meat and a glass of *vin ordinaire* every day for dinner. You must have both to-day. I shall send Ma'm'selle Ursule up to you; give her your orders and the money, and she will purchase your dinner, as well as your dress. Remember, you are to take my prescription, without fail. A mutton chop and a glass of wine, and after that you must rest or amuse yourself; no work, no practising!"

As the door closed upon him, Sylvie's mother exclaimed querulously: "I foresee he is to become an absolute tyrant over us. He orders our very dinners. He will take the whole control of our domestic concerns before long, and we shall be completely his *slaves*."

"No, mother; he is only thinking of what is best for *me*, his pupil. He sees how important it is that I should grow strong, and that is the reason he gives those minute directions, which we are bound to follow."

Ursule now made her appearance. The appropriateness of the white silk dress was discussed at length, and its purchase decided upon. Then, in obedience to Maitre Beaujeu's commands—for he had given Ursule a hint—it was settled what provisions should be bought for dinner.

"Are you not going with me, Sylvie? Shopping will amuse you; it is a delightful occupation when one has money;" and she glanced significantly at the gold pieces which still lay in Sylvie's lap.

"I would rather stay at home and amuse myself quietly, since I am to have a holiday," replied Sylvie; she would not confess that she still felt too weak to walk. "But I wish my dear mother could be persuaded to go with you. The day is delightful; the air will do her good, and you need not hurry, so that she will not fatigue herself. Do go, mother!" added Sylvie, beseechingly, as she placed the gold in her mother's hand.

The apathetic mother looked doubtful, but inclined to yield. A little more coaxing and she was conquered. She laid the louis-d'or on the table, and was tying on her bonnet, when in walked her husband. His eyes sparkled as though they reflected the glitter of the gold upon which they rested.

When he was informed of Maitre Beaujeu's orders in regard to Sylvie, he replied gaily, "He is quite right! he's a good fellow! and it's very thoughtful of him; but I will attend to all that. I will be your banker, my rich little daughter!"

He was delightedly gathering up the bright louis-d'or when Ursule interfered. "You must leave us enough to purchase a white silk dress, Monsieur de la Roche; that is indispensable. We shall be very fortunte if we get it for ninety-francs—there will be ten over. Have the goodness to wait till we are certain of the exact amount."

"Nonsense, nonsense, my good Ursule. After

I have provided a suitable repast you shall have the change. This is a very small sum, after all; but of course it is only an earnest of what is to come, and we must try to make it do for the present."

Saying this, he quietly put the gold pieces into his empty purse, and sallied out, leaving his wife and daughter, and their devoted friend, not a little discomfited.

Prudence had been wholly omitted in the elements that composed the character of Everard de la Roche. In his expenditures he never evinced the slightest forethought, or stopped to make the most natural calculations. He invariably purchased, when the means were attainable, whatever pleased his fancy, without condescending to anything so *mean* as economy—without reflecting that there were actual necessaries to which the sum in question ought to be devoted—without ever asking himself whether the money in his possession was his own or belonged to his creditors, and without admitting that honesty made it theirs if it chanced to be due to them.

When he returned to his lodgings an hour later, he was accompanied by a man who carried a large basket. With a munificent air he gave the porter a piece of silver, placed the basket on the table, and with boyish glee bade every one gather around.

First he took out a beautiful bouquet, which he had purchased at the celebrated Madeleine flower-market; this he pronounced absolutely necessary to dress the table for a decent meal. Next he brought forth some large strawberries and some fine cherries; he had evidently selected the best that could be procured of each fruit; then he produced a Perigord pie (a most expensive delicacy), some tarts, a pair of fine fowls, a tongue, an ample supply of soup meat, a fresh salmon, some green peas and artichokes, a bottle of olives, and three bottles—not of *vin ordinaire*, the customary dinner drink of France—but fine claret of choice vintage,

"It was quite a luxury to market once more," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands hilariously. "I have so long been denied the inestimable privilege that I really enjoyed it! I fancy we shall dine to-day! My dear Marguerite, do look merry for once! I imagine it is those unbecoming caps of yours which always give your face that gloomy look; see what I have bought to conjure back the expression of old times, and for you to do honor to our dinner by wearing."

He took from a paper, in which it was neatly folded, a pretty white lace cap, trimmed with bright ribbons, and tossed it towards her.

"But, Monsieur de la Roche, what have you been doing?" asked Ursule, dolefully. "After the money you must have spent in all these provisions, and that cap, how can there be enough left for Sylvie's white dress?"

"My good friend, come and dine with us today, and don't talk nonsense; I really do not know what change I have over, but it will be wanted before our next supply of gold comes in."

He drew from his pocket a few pieces of silver, among which shone but one remaining louis-d'or. What could Sylvie do? What could her mother say? Both were silent; the one from respect, the other from despair.

Not so Ursule.

"To eat up a white silk dress, which Sylvie needs so much, in this fashion! It's absurd, Monsieur de la Roche! It's monstrous! It's a cannibal proceeding, for it's eating that child's flesh and blood! A few francs would have purchased a capital dinner, and left money enough over for the dress. What *are* we to do?"

"Dine! dine, once more!" returned Monsieur de la Roche, jovially. "My good Ursule, have the philosophy to enjoy the present by dining with us to-day, and not finding fault with my catering for our humble table, and let the dresses of the future take care of themselves! Here, Sylvie, put this bouquet in water—it is for you, who are always so delighted with flowers. I fear you have nothing to hold them but that broken jar; I wish I had thought of buying a pretty vase. How slowly you move, child! Are you fatigued? Suppose you stay, my excellent Ursule, and help Sylvie to prepare the repast; but don't let us have that white silk dress dished up for one of the courses."

"It's *dished*, indeed!" sighed Ursule; but she deemed it useless to remonstrate further; and noticing Sylvie's wan look, considerately remained to prepare a meal which she knew child and mother had hearts too full to enjoy, though the filial daughter never uttered one word of reproach at beholding her first earnings thus recklessly dissipated.

CHAPTER VIII.

RUSTLING LAURELS.

One person, at least, enjoyed the repast that Sylvie's inconsequent father had so lavishly provided, and that was the prodigal purveyor himself. He presided at his humble board with lordly bearing, and as though he were entertaining, in place of his pale-faced wife and drooping daughter, and their unassuming friend, a host of distinguished guests. It was long since he had tasted wine, especially of a quality as irreproachable as that which he now liberally quaffed, and he drank to the health of Silvie, then to that of Maitre Beaujeu, then to the prosperity of musicians in general, then toasted, in flowery phrase, the Muse of music, then all her sister Muses, and then the world at large! With every glass, his naturally expansive heart opened wider and wider, until it took in all humanity.

Just as Sylvie placed the dessert upon the table, a troop of eager *friends* poured in; for, the instant

Fortune smiled promisingly upon the De la Roches, they discovered that they possessed numberless *friends* whom they never before dreamed of enrolling in Friendship's category. These good, disinterested, *incurious* people came to offer their congratulations and proffer their services. De la Roche received them *en grand Seigneur*, graciously appropriating their compliments as though their homage were entirely due to himself.

It was not possible to invite all the visitors to be seated, for the poor apartment contained but four chairs, the piano-stool, and one low bench. These, however, were soon occupied, and the side of the bed converted into a sofa. After that, the new comers were obliged to stand, as were Sylvie, her parents, and Ursule.

The delighted host requested every one present to favor him by drinking a bumper to the future laurels of the young singer, and poured the ruddy wine without stint. Mildly rebuking her forgetfulness by a look, he desired Sylvie to hand the tarts, strawberries, and cherries to their esteemed guests. With tottering feet, and trying to force a few feeble smiles, she obeyed; but the ever watchful Ursule, perceiving her unfitness to discharge even this light office of hospitality, caught the dishes from her hands, and, casting a by no means gentle glance at De la Roche as she passed him, whispered, "It is more proper for *me* to do this; and do you not see how fatigued she is?"

Too much elated by the glory of the hour to notice an intimation that his daughter was incapable of the required exertion through weakness, he quickly took the hint that it was too great a condescension for a newly crowned queen of song to wait upon her lowly admirers. He proudly drew her to his side, and with one arm around her slender form, stretched the other commandingly towards the assemblage, and harangued his guests with oratorical emphasis. Light peals of bombast intermingled with showers of roses. He thanked them for the honor of this visit—he might say, the sunlight of their presence; for their admiration of his child, which he modestly admitted was by no means misplaced; he told them that though he would ere long be compelled to remove from their midst—though possibly his path of life, once so thorny, now about to be thickly strewn with flowers, would so widely diverge from theirs that they might meet no more upon this side of eternity, he should never forget the kindness, the sympathy, the devotion of the unpretending friends who had poured balm upon his healing wounds! He assured them he would never look down upon the lowliest of that little band, however high the position he might be called upon to occupy; and that he would bury beneath the waters of oblivion all remembrance of the countless inconveniences to which he had for some years been subjected, when he recollected the happiness of this moment, the proudest of his chequered life!

Claret, weak and unintoxicating beverage as it is usually deemed by the French, when it chances to be the juice of as fine a vintage as that which had been selected by Monsieur de la Roche, *may* mount to a constitutionally light brain, and we are inclined to think that this gentleman's natural hilarity and volubility were increased by the unwonted stimulus. A stranger would certainly have arrived at the conclusion that he was a wronged and estimable individual, who had just received some rightful inheritance, of which he had long been unlawfully deprived, or that he had amassed a fortune through his own ability and untiring industry, which he was now permitted to enjoy for the smooth remainder of his days.

A couple of hours had elapsed, but the good people seemed very unwilling to disperse. Ursule, finding that no one stirred, though bottles and dishes were alike empty, took Dame Manot into her confidence, told her that Sylvie was too feeble to undergo this prolonged excitement, and begged that she would give a *moving* hint to her friends. The considerate dame, who had a sincere affection for Sylvie, managed so admirably that the gratified visitors rapidly took their departure.

De la Roche, elated to the highest pitch of restlessness, could not have tarried with the rather dull family party that remained. He took up his hat, and told his smileless wife that he meant to visit the *Theatre Français* and see the famous Rachel, the light of whose genius had just burst upon the Parisian world.

Ursule was strongly inclined to remonstrate.

"You cannot afford it! You have nearly wasted all the poor child's earnings already!" were the words that rose to her lips, but she had not the courage to utter the just rebuke, and Monsieur de la Roche departed.

To get Sylvie to bed was the next most important move; but how was it to be effected without awakening the fears of Madame de la Roche? All Ursule's tact was needed to avoid that undesirable result. The unreasonable mother had several times during the day expressed her conviction that she was about to lose all her authority over her child, and Ursule thought to turn this weakness to account. If the suggestion that Sylvie ought to retire emanated from Madame de la Roche herself, and went forth in the shape of a command, her mind might be diverted from examining into the need of such an order.

The ready-witted old maid took her aside, and said:

"Monsieur de la Roche is very unreasonable; he has not proper consideration for Sylvie. You really will be obliged to exert *your* maternal rights and interfere. He made her stand for full two hours, while your chairs were all occupied with those stupid people whom he chose to entertain very superfluously. If you take my advice, you will order Sylvie off to bed, and insist upon her resting. Do not mind her showing a disinclination to go; use a little needful authority; you are her mother, and you can make her obey."

Madame de la Roche greedily swallowed the bait, and was highly pleased to feel herself of a little importance; for, during the events of the last week, she had become more completely a nonentity than ever. With quite a show of command, she desired Sylvie to retire forthwith.

The weary girl failed to play her part in the little drama by even a faint appearance of unwillingness, but Ursule covered the deficiency by treating her as though she had positively rebelled.

"Now, Sylvie," said the good creature, deprecatingly, "do not argue with your mother, and try to gainsay her wishes. Don't you understand that she chooses you to go to bed? Do be off at once, like a good girl, and don't dispute her orders; *she* knows what is for your good. Come, I will be your lady's maid, and undress you."

With a parade of compulsion, she led the unresisting girl into the little chamber, and helped her to disrobe, and thus afforded her aid which she sorely needed.

Sylvie slumbered more tranquilly than upon the previous night. She rose the next morning partially restored, yet it seemed as though something ailed her—she could not definitely tell *what;* she experienced no actual pain, but was oppressed by a sinking sensation that incapacitated her from energetic action. Strength of will, however, partially supplied the place of strength of *physique.* She went through the round of her daily occupations without uttering a complaint, thus escaping her mother's close scrutiny; the observation of her thoughtless father it was always easy to avoid.

Maitre Beaujeu made his instructions very brief; her voice required repose, he said. When the lesson ended, he remarked:

"Now you must walk out. Go to the *Tuileries*, or the *Champs Elysées*, or where you please; but you must have fresh air and exercise." Turning to her mother, he added: "Will you accompany her, Madame?'

"How is it possible to spare the time?" she answered, rebelliously; "I must sew, and Sylvie ought to practise."

"I tell you *she ought to walk!*" thundered Beaujeu, biting his lips to restrain his ire. "If *you* do not choose to go with *your daughter*, I will accompany *my pupil*, to whom air and exercise are of vital importance."

Madame de la Roche, who writhed under Beaujeu's control, thought that to consent to this latter alternative would be giving the reins too completely into his hands; she answered quickly:

"No; if she is to go, *I* will accompany her."

"Very well; as you please," replied Beaujeu, taking up his violin. "Do not forget the directions I gave yesterday in regard to your diet, Sylvie; and be sure you spend at least a couple of hours in the open air!"

"Aye, we'll *spend!* No fear of forgetting *that.* We do nothing *but spend!*" sighed the lugubrious mother, as he disappeared; "*spend* time unprofitably, and *spend* money recklessly! it is disheartening. But we are not allowed to rule our own actions, and must submit to our fate."

Sylvie heartily enjoyed the rarely accorded pleasure of a promenade on the *Champs Elysées*, in spite of her mother's lengthy tirade against the cruel despotism of Maitre Beaujeu, and her constantly bemoaning the waste of time of which he compelled them to be guilty.

Monsieur de la Roche was diligently occupied in seeking for handsome apartments; and, having found a furnished suite that struck his fancy, he would have engaged it, and commenced moving at once, had not Sylvie ventured very gently, but firmly, to oppose this rash step. She failed, however, to make him see his imprudence, or to alter his determination, until she reminded him that they would not be permitted to leave their present lodging without paying the amount due up to the time for which it was rented, and begged him to count what funds remained, and calculate whether this was possible. He complied, merely to humor such an excellent little daughter, he said, though it was nonsense, for they had more than sufficient. On finding out his error he was a little staggered, and Sylvie gained the day. Her father magnanimously consented to postpone the proposed removal until after her next appearance!

If Sylvie herself lacked strength, her voice had lost no power;—it was never richer, never sweeter, never more wondrously flexible.

Ursule alone noticed that her hands were still feverish, and that a hectic flush crimsoned her usually pale cheeks, and faded away again at brief intervals.

That Monsieur de la Roche should be among his daughter's auditors at the Duke de ——'s was out of the question. The concert was given by the Duke to his friends, who received cards of invitation. The evening was to close with a grand ball.

Sylvie's father resigned himself to the unavoidable privation more philosophically than could have been expected, but found consolation by largely indulging in glorious visions of the time when the novice of to-day would break loose from her master's leading-strings, and be solely under paternal guidance.

Sylvie was engaged to repeat the three airs she had sung with so much *éclat* at the *Salle Ste. Cecile.* This was a politic arrangement on the part of Maitre Beaujeu, for she was not only spared the fatigue of fresh study, but the verdict passed upon her execution of those songs was too enthusiastically favorable for her success to be in any peril.

Her surprise was as great as her gratification when Maitre Beaujeu, on the morning of the concert, laid a chaplet dexterously woven of ivy leaves upon the piano, and bade her wear it in her hair that night. A delicate attention from her rough master might well excite as much wonder as gratitude.

He had a quick eye and ready worship for the beautiful; he constantly lamented Sylvie's unattractive looks, and pondered on the possibility of improving them. As his back was always turned when she was singing, he was unaware of the electrifying change that was wrought by the outgushing of that melody which had its fountain in the recesses of her soul. He had selected this ivy wreath because he knew it would display to advantage her luxuriant dark hair and finely-shaped head, and give a classic effect to her pale countenance. Frenchman as he was, he had chosen *natural* leaves as best suited to the unartificial wearer.

Much as Sylvie prized her master's token, it did not cause her to slight Mathieu's offering of bright geranium blossoms. Those she wore in her bosom.

"Now for it! How does the white silk dress become you? Is not my garland of ivy just the thing to set it off? I expect to see you trying to pass for a beauty to-night!" said Maitre Beaujeu, as he entered the room to take charge of his pupil; then added, looking at her more closely, Why—this is not white silk? Surely this is the common little frock you wore before! What has become of the grand toilette you were preparing? Has your skilful mantua-maker spoiled the white silk in the cutting?"

Monsieur de la Roche, who was standing by, grew nervous. He felt the thunder-clouds gathering over his head, and looked uneasily at Sylvie, who had not the presence of mind to answer.

Ursule replied with some asperity: "I have not spoiled the white silk, Monsieur; and if it's not ready for to-night, it's no fault of *Sylvie's*, nor of *mine.*"

Monsieur de la Roche was seized with a violent fit of coughing, during which he darted pleading glances at the dress-maker.

Her heart had long been troubled with a chronic softness that incapacitated her from resisting the least appeal to her generosity, and she concluded the speech, so spitefully commenced, with: "The white silk will do for the next time. *She shall certainly* wear it then!" (with quite a determined look at the father.) Then to divert Maitre Beaujeu's suspicions, remarked: "Those ivy-leaves give Sylvie a Norma-like look. Did you ever see her appear to such advantage?"

"No, never. But I wish her *best* were *better*," Beaujeu could not resist the temptation to remark.

Sylvie laughed with unconcerned good-humor, which showed that she had too little vanity for it to be wounded, and answered: "If *I* were as beautiful as *you* are frank, one might be contented. Might one not, my master?"

Beaujeu had ordered a *fiacre*, an indulgence his restricted means had not allowed on the two former occasions. When they reached the courtyard of the palatial mansion of the Duke, the driver stopped. A crowd of equipages passed in, but he knew that it would be improper for his humble vehicle to approach nearer. Sylvie and her master alighted.

What a scene of Eastern enchantment burst on their sight as they entered the gate! The *court* was brilliantly illuminated with colored lamps, rising from baskets of flowers; in the centre a fountain sent up sparkling jets, that reflected prismatic hues as they fell over statues of water-nymphs; the whole round of the court was girdled by a wall of blossoming orange and lemon trees, intermingled with flowering shrubs and the rarest exotics. A gorgeous carpet, softer than the most velvety turf, was spread upon the marble steps and over the path that led to the carriages.

Sylvie gazed about her in rapturous amazement. She imagined herself suddenly transported to some ideal land which she had only beheld in her dreams. She would gladly have lingered to examine the flowers and inhale their entrancing perfume; but Maitre Beaujeu hurried her on, for they were later than usual.

Monsieur le Grand greeted them with almost oppressive cordiality, as they entered the sumptuous apartment appropriated to the musicians. And when they were conducted to the concert hall, and Sylvie took her place among the singers, an audible murmur of delight ran through the crowd. She was immediately recognised; and the audience betrayed so much impatience to hear her voice once more, that not the faintest attempt was made to *encore* a single performer who preceded her.

When her turn came she rose with graceful self-possession, and did not *again* forget to salute the spectators.

When she sang in public before, she had beheld no one—had been conscious of no presence—had hardly remembered that she was not in her own humble little chamber. Now, amid the crowd, *one* face shone distinctly, throwing all others into a background of shadows; aye, *shone*, for to her excited vision, that peerless head almost seemed encircled by a luminous halo. The countenance was that which had haunted her dreams, and risen night and day, unsummoned, before her waking sight. With the eyes of her mind she had not seen it less clearly than she saw it now.

She was singing, not to the noble assemblage who breathlessly drank in the seraphic sounds that poured from her lips, but to one being only—one to whom she had never dared to open those lips in speech. Not that she analysed her own tumultuous emotions, or knew what she was doing, or comprehended the intensity of feeling, the holy fervor, which she threw into the love-breathing music.

The audience had been charmed when they listened to her "*O Mio Fernando!*" at the *Salle Ste. Cecile;* but now, the impassioned tone—the *abandon*—the reality that spoke in voice and look, penetrated the coldest heart, and created a perfect furor, by which the most insensible listener was carried away.

All Sylvie's weakness had vanished—she had never felt stronger, more elastic, more at her ease. Her step was firm, her movements were free, her bosom rose and sank with full and deep inspiration; if her pulses were rapid, they were also regular. She was exhilarated to the highest degree of pleasurable excitement which she had ever experienced. Was it the stimulus of adulation, the throb of gratified vanity that awoke this ecstatic sensation? Was it the exercise of the wonderful gift with which she had been endowed? Was it the dawning of some new, uncomprehended capacity of soul that filled her with its sweet, palpitating strangeness? She could not have answered these questions herself.

She did not hear what was said to her, and answered at random. She could not have told afterwards who had addressed her, or even whether her master had spoken to her. The loud acclamations conveyed no meaning to her ears—the waving handkerchiefs none to her eyes—until she saw one arm lifted, and from that hand floated her banner of triumph.

When the concert was over, as Sylvie stood with her arm in that of Maitre Beaujeu, looking proudly happy, and bowing her adieux to Monsieur Le Grand, many of the audience thronged around the latter, and begged to be presented to the young stranger. Before he could comply, Honorine had forced her way through the crowd, and with the Marquis de St. Amar reached her side.

"I am commissioned by the Duke," said the little sprite, "to beg you to remain to the ball. Let me add my entreaties to his. You do not look fatigued to-night—you seem delightfully fresh. Do stay! Will you not?"

Sylvie's glowing face expressed no disinclination to consent. "If Maitre Beaujeu does not object," she answered, turning her eyes upon him with a look of mingled submission and entreaty.

"I am sure Monsieur Beaujeu will not refuse us this petition?" replied Honorine, addressing him in a tone of bewitching supplication.

"If I thought Mademoiselle de la Roche would not suffer from fatigue," he answered, "the honor——"

Sylvie interrupted him.

"I am not in the least tired, my dear master. If I may, I should like to stay."

"And Monsieur says distinctly that you *may*. That look of his bade me tell you so," rejoined the lively Honorine. "I can read faces, and his is a very expressive one. Don't you think so?" asked the little flatterer.

"My master quarrels with me when I am saucy enough to tell him what his eyes betray," replied Sylvie, archly.

"He will not deny that *I* have interpreted his look rightly, will you, Monsieur Beaujeu?" inquired the syren.

"That is a liberty I could not venture to take," returned the musician, not a little charmed at having such a pair of clear, frank, brown eyes fastened upon his time-furrowed visage.

"Oh! thank you, Monsieur Beaujeu; but we must take immediate possession of Mademoiselle de la Roche, else a host of admirers will be running away with her. So, Mademoiselle Sylvie, take my brother's arm, and——"

Sylvie started violently, and the blood leapt in a sudden torrent to her cheeks and brow.

"But allow me first to present my brother, the Marquis de St. Amar," resumed Honorine. "How surprised you look! Are you astonished that such a grave-looking personage should have such a wilful, troublesome little torment of a sister? At all events, as he happens to have no other, he has no better. But, do tell me, for whom did you take me?"

"I imagined—I understood that—somebody said you were Madame la Marquise de St. Amar."

Honorine's low, merry laughter rang out like the rapid sweeping of a hand over harp-strings.

Her brother replied—

"No, Mademoiselle; should I ever choose a wife, it will not be such an elfish little gossamer as this butterfly sister of mine."

"Of course not; he will court some awfully stately and oppressively sensible person, who will frighten me out of my wits whenever I come into her august presence, and whom I shall mortally detest, and never be able to call sister. But I'll take my revenge by never inviting the odious pair to the concerts I give, and by always having you to sing for me. Now, as my brother is passionately fond of music, that will punish him for inflicting a bore upon me as a relative."

This bantering conversation was interrupted by Monsieur Le Grand, who, with profuse apologies to Mademoiselle de St. Amar, presented a number of ladies and gentlemen to the youthful singer.

Sylvie replied to their compliments with grateful humility, and answered their inquiries with unembarrassed propriety. Her modest artlessness was wholly free from a touch of shyness. It seemed as though the manners of good society had suddenly been ingrafted upon her by the very atmosphere she was breathing.

She stood between Honorine and her brother, the loadstar of a circle of admirers. Maitre Beaujeu at a distance watched her in mute amazement, as with unaffected ease she turned to each person who addressed her, smilingly accepted floral offerings, and gaily entered into conversation with old and young.

The rosy glow upon her cheeks kindled up her eyes, until they seemed to shoot forth effulgent rays; her lips, even when silent, spoke through the eloquently varying expression that wreathed, or curved, or parted them; her fragile form had lost its willow-like droop, and the statuesque grace of her *poses* could not be surpassed by a sculptor's ideal. Beaujeu found it impossible to recognise his sallow-visaged, bent, weak, meagre little pupil in the resplendent being that stood before him, calmly receiving the homage of an admiring crowd. In one hour the feeble, shrinking girl had matured into strong and self-reliant womanhood—every bud of promise had suddenly sprung into glorious bloom. There was glamour in the marvellous unfolding.

As he gazed upon her, she moved away, accompanied by Honorine, the Marquis, and the Duke. Beaujeu followed her with his eyes only. Astonishment transfixed him to the spot.

Midnight sounded. The lateness of the hour aroused him. It was time to conduct her home. She was delicate in the extreme, and her health might suffer from this unusual dissipation. He wandered from saloon to saloon searching for her in vain.

At last, through a small opening in the crowd, he caught a glimpse of the ivy circlet which he had ordered that morning, little dreaming that the head for which it was destined would wear it so regally. With considerable difficulty he made his way through the throng. Honorine and Sylvie were standing together beside the sumptuously spread supper-table. The Marquis was in the act of handing the latter a golden shell, holding an ice that had the hue and form of a peach. Though the humble maiden had certainly never seen a frozen cream in this attractive shape, or taken in her dainty fingers a shining shell of gold, in lieu of a plate, she betrayed not the faintest token of surprise; her thoughts were so much engrossed, that she experienced none; or else everything by which she was surrounded seemed so entirely the work of enchantment, that she had ceased to wonder.

"It is very late, Mademoiselle Sylvie" (Beaujeu uttered the *Mademoiselle* involuntarily,—he could not have accosted her as was his wont); "you must be fatigued—it is time for us to take our leave."

"*Must* we go, my master? I am not in the least tired!"

Voices on every side protested against her departure.

"I cannot think of parting with her yet, Monsieur Beaujeu. Leave her with us a little while longer," petitioned Honorine.

Sylvie repeated the words, "A little while longer," in a wishful tone. She could not bear to have her dream broken so soon.

The old man shook his head, but not very determinedly.

"There are large odds against you, Monsieur Beaujeu," said the Marquis de St. Amar. "You will be obliged to yield, and grant us the happiness of Mademoiselle de la Roche's presence for a while longer."

Sylvie's eyes shone with redoubled lustre, but the lids dropped suddenly over them, as though they feared to betray their own exultant gleaming.

Beaujeu bowed assent, without remonstrating, and withdrew.

Another hour passed, and still another. Sylvie had flitted away, and her master had again lost sight of her. She was now in the ball-room, watching with eager interest the gliding figures that, as they threaded the mazes of the dance, were reflected in mirrors which lined the spacious saloon from ceiling to floor.

Honorine was dancing, or rather floating through the air, as though her fairy feet were under no compulsion to touch the ground. Her brother, with stately movements, that kept perfect time to the inspiring music, without stooping to Terpsichorean steps, was leading a fair young partner through the same set. The Duke was conversing with Sylvie, but her eyes were turned from him, and rested upon the dancers.

Honorine was the first to spy Beaujeu wending his way towards his pupil. Fortunately, the dance had just concluded, and courtesying hurriedly to her partner, she joined her brother, exclaiming, "There is the hawk in pursuit of our singing-bird; let us fly to the rescue, or he will capture and carry her away."

But, before they could reach Sylvie, her tutor had told her that it was time to depart in a tone so peremptory that it silenced objection. She had made her adieu to the Duke, and allowed herself to be led away.

"You are not going yet, Monsieur Beaujeu!" cried Honorine, following them. "Stanislaus is so cross with me for having compelled him to dance when he wanted to be more agreeably occupied, that I shall not be able to obtain his pardon to-night if you leave the moment the dance is over."

"What nonsense you talk, little madcap," retorted the Marquis. "I trust, Monsieur Beaujeu, you will allow us the pleasure of taking Mademoiselle de la Roche and yourself home."

"Many thanks, Monsieur le Marquis, for the proposed honor," replied Beaujeu; "but we have a conveyance which has been waiting for some hours."

"No matter; send it away," urged Honorine, "and let us take you."

"You are very kind, Mademoiselle; but we will not give you the trouble," answered the musician, with an air of such firm declination that, although Honorine looked disappointed, good breeding forbade her to remonstrate.

At that moment the Duke addressed the Marquis and his sister, asking their advice about a *fête champêtre* which he was about to give. Without further leave-taking, Beaujeu conducted Sylvie to the apartment where she had left her wrappings.

On passing out of the street door they found it was raining fast. They hurried through the court-yard to the gate, where Beaujeu expected to find his *fiacre* waiting; it was not to be seen. In vain he hunted among the splendid equipages; the plebeian conveyance had disappeared! After many inquiries, he obtained the startling information that a *fiacre* had stood there until within an hour, but that the driver got into a dispute with one of the coachmen, and on the approach of the police, fearing that he might be arrested, had driven away too rapidly for pursuit.

"What are we to do?" broke forth Beaujeu, in deep distress. "How is it possible for you to walk in this pouring rain? It is dreadful! It will ruin your voice! It will kill you! You will certainly take your death of cold!"

"Don't believe *that*, my dear master. I am quite able to walk. The air will refresh me; and as for the rain," she added gaily, "I do not feel it—I do not mind it more than——"

"Than a *swan?*" added Beaujeu, in a tone of compliment that sounded strangely, it so rarely found voice on his lips. The next instant he shuddered, and said: "I do not like the comparison; it reminds me that the swan is fabled to die singing."

"While *I* shall *live* by singing; so your simile is really not felicitous!" answered Sylvie, gaily.

As she attempted to gather up her dress to save it from contact with the mud, the bouquets she was carrying encumbered her. With an awkward display of gallantry, Beaujeu offered to take charge of them.

Sylvie tripped on as airily as though she had not undergone the least fatigue—and how blithely she prattled! The rain was beating down upon her head as though she were walking in a shower-bath; the old veil was drenched, the black mantle saturated, the white slippers soaked through, yet she never heeded — or only found subject for mirth in these inconveniences.

Maitre Beaujeu listened to her pleasant talk, and answered with a deference which he had never before shown. Ever and anon, he inwardly asked himself, with a sense of vague wonder, if this were indeed Sylvie. He felt that his mind was brought into communion, not with that of a mere undeveloped girl, but that of a woman of aptitude and intellect; guileless as girlhood, but salient, sparkling, comprehensive, intuitively adapting itself to circumstances, as womanhood in its finest manifestation.

The clock had struck four ere they reached the Rue St. Denis. It was some time before Dame Manot could be roused from her heavy slumber. When, at last, she opened the door and sleepily thrust out her night-cap, and beheld Sylvie standing without, her veil and mantle blowing in the wind, the dripping white dress clinging to her lithe limbs as though she had just risen from a bath, while Maitre Beaujeu looked as if he had been drowned and resuscitated, the good woman shrieked with such genuine dismay, that but for the wailing of the wind and the pattering of the rain, her voice would have summoned the guardians of the night.

"Stop your unearthly howling!" growled Maitre Beaujeu, trying to pass her. "What is the matter with the woman?"

"Ah! what is the matter with Sylvie, rather!" cried the Dame. "Has she failed? Has she been disgraced? Ah! what has happened?"

Maitre Beaujeu disdained to give any explanation of their present plight; but Sylvie stopped him as he was hurrying her on.

"You see how you must have misjudged this kind friend the other day, my master! You see how grieved she is when she thinks I have not succeeded! Was I not right to believe that she rejoiced at my good fortune?" Then she turned soothingly to the shivering *concierge.* "Nothing is the matter, Dame Manot, except that the *fiacre* disappeared; the driver got into a quarrel and drove off without leave. We were obliged to walk; but everything else went well; it has been the happiest evening of my life!"

As they were ascending the stairs, Beaujeu inquired, "At what hour to-morrow do you wish to take your lesson?"

It was the first time he had ever consulted her pleasure or convenience.

"At whatever hour suits you best," replied Sylvie, with her wonted humility.

"But have you any preference? I can make my time conform to yours."

"That would not be right; I am only too grateful to receive my lessons whenever your leisure serves."

The old man stopped suddenly, and seizing both her hands, asked with emotion: "Sylvie, will you *always* be grateful? Will not contact with the idol-making world change your nature? Will not the hot touch of aristocratic palms brush away the delicate bloom from your character? Will not the voice of adulation poison its sweetness? Will not world-knowledge destroy your holy innocence? Will you always be what you are now?"

"If I am—if I do not grow *much better*, my master, you will have cause to blush for me."

They were at her chamber door. Beaujeu released her hands, laid the bouquets he was carrying in her arms, and went on his way.

Ursule was sitting up with Sylvie's parents, counting the hours as they slowly passed. It is needless to state that Madame de la Roche had worked herself into a state of almost frantic alarm at her daughter's non-appearance. Her husband's sanguine temperament, which always anticipated that which was most agreeable, caused him to conjecture rightly in this instance. He was perfectly certain that, after the concert concluded, the rising star had been solicited to shine upon the ball. Though Ursule gladly accepted this explanation of Sylvie's prolonged absence, Madame de la Roche refused to give credence to any solution so pleasing and satisfactory.

When, at last, Sylvie entered, dripping with the rain, she was greeted by a general cry of compassionate distress; but her beaming face, still flushed with the roses of triumph, her glittering, dancing eyes and smiling lips announced that there was no cause for commiseration.

Her mother's moans could with difficulty be silenced long enough to allow her daughter to relate the misadventure which led to a predicament which she assured them was of very little importance, for had she not often walked in the rain before? she asked; and did it ever harm her?

Ursule removed her mantle and veil without the least allusion to the damage they had sustained. On the contrary, she threw them out of sight, that they might not attract attention. Then she took the bouquets out of the young girl's hands and examined them with admiration.

"Did you ever see flowers so perfect?" asked Sylvie, delightedly.

"They are beautiful—very beautiful; they are hot-house plants—but I have seen all these flowers before—years, years ago!" and the old maid sighed at some sad recollection conjured up by the sight of the lovely exotics. But quickly chasing away the intruding memory, she relinquished the flowers, exclaiming, "My dear Sylvie, you must take off those wet clothes instantly, and go to bed. Come, I will undress you."

Sylvie was not inclined to retire. She would much rather have lingered to enjoy her father's raptures and comfort her mother, whose lamentations at the prospect of her daughter's taking cold were loud and long. But Ursule knew if that threatening calamity *could* be averted, it could only be through immediate care; and she would not consent to a moment's delay.

In less than half an hour the ivy wreath lay upon the tributary bouquets, which had been carefully placed in water; and the head those shining leaves had encircled, reposed upon its unluxurious pillow; and Sylvie's bright eyes were closed in gentle sleep, while upon her lips the happy smile still lingered.

CHAPTER IX.

LOST GIFTS.

The shadowy light of morning had merged into broad day, but all was quiet in Sylvie's little chamber. Her mother stole softly in and found her sleeping; but ever and anon she stirred uneasily, uttering faint moans. Her breathing was labored—her long hair, loosened by her unquiet movements, swept over the couch in wild disorder—her arms were tossed above her head; she had flung aside the bed-covering, as though its weight oppressed her. Madame de la Roche watched her for a few moments, then hastened to inform her husband, almost with an air of exultation at this proof of her own sagacity, that her sad predictions were surely verified. He received the communication with merry disbelief, and said if Sylvie slept she was doing well, and that breakfast need not longer be delayed, as he had business on hand. The business in question was simply to get rid of a portion of the sum that remained out of his daughter's scanty store.

Shortly after the meal was over, Ursule came to inquire after her beloved little friend; but learning that she had not yet waked, noiselessly withdrew.

Mathieu, who was hovering about the entry, greatly troubled at not hearing Sylvie's voice, though her regular hour for practising had long since arrived, ventured to accost the mantua-maker as she passed. A look of satisfaction, pleasant to see, chased the expression of disappointment from his thin, pinched countenance, when he knew that the gentle songstress was still slumbering, and he magnanimously replied that, although he always felt restless and comfortless when he missed her singing of a morning, he wished she might sleep all day!

It seemed likely that his generous desire would be gratified; for, when Maitre Beaujeu came to the door, a couple of hours later, Madame de la Roche, who wandered in and out of Sylvie's room every few minutes, informed him that she was still sleeping, but very uncomfortably, and it was her opinion that she was seriously ill.

If this suggestion had emanated from any one but Madame de la Roche, Maitre Beaujeu would have felt concerned; but he was so much accustomed to her dark-side view of events, and her constant cry of "wolf," that, without noticing the alarming conclusion at which she had arrived, he whisperingly charged her not to disturb her daughter, closed the door without sound, and went away, content that his pupil was resting, and gaining new strength.

Prompted by the feminine spirit of contradiction, and further instigated by her dislike to acknowledge Maitre Beaujeu's authority, Madame de la Roche returned to Sylvie's bedside, and, as her daughter's head rolled backward and forward on the pillow, stooped over and spoke to her. Sylvie gave no sign of hearing, but her head still swayed to and fro, the black tresses coiling and tangling with the motion. Her mother, with rapidly increasing agitation, called her in a louder tone; still no answer: she took her hands, but even a violent pressure produced no effect; then, seriously frightened, she shook the slumbering maiden, but wholly failed to rouse her. Almost beside herself, the panic-stricken woman rushed down-stairs to Ursule, and implored her to hasten to Sylvie, who was probably dying.

Ursule waited not to ask questions, or to ponder upon Madame de la Roche's unconquerable tendency to exaggeration; but with rapid steps outstripped her summoner, and stood by the sufferer's bed. Sylvie's dishevelled hair, the restless movement of her head, and her pain-betokening attitude, were somewhat startling; but Ursule was prepared for so much worse, that, with a feeling of relief, she smiled at her own forgetfulness of Madame de la Roche's idosyncrasy, which had occasioned her such a moment of anguish.

The self-tormentor was at her side, whispering, "Try to wake her—I could not;—try, and you will see she does not wake."

"The sounder she sleeps the better," replied Ursule, repressing her vexation. "Sleep is a panacea for all ills; it would be very inconsiderate, very *wrong* to disturb her."

She saw that Madame de la Roche entertained a different opinion; and, partly to guard Sylvie, partly to divert her thoughts from their present sad direction, Ursule sat down to the work upon which she had been employed when Madame de la Roche burst into her room, and which she still held in her hand.

Madame de la Roche also resumed her needle; and Ursule chatted so cheerfully, though in a low tone, that the dispirited mother was gradually restored to a state of tolerable calmness.

They were sitting at the window in the larger apartment; neither heard a faint exclamation, a sort of choked cry, which issued from behind Sylvie's curtain. It was repeated more audibly, and in an instant both were by Sylvie's bedside. She was sitting up, her lips apart, her large eyes frightfully dilated—actually glaring with horror. As Ursule bent over her she again made a violent effort to speak, but a hoarse murmur was the only sound that broke from her lips.

"Sylvie, what is it, my darling?" asked the dress-maker, disguising her consternation.

The young girl looked at her piteously, and with great difficulty replied, in a stifled whisper, "*I have lost my voice;* I cannot speak louder!"

Ursule glanced at the mother, who stood at the foot of the bed weeping and wringing her hands, though she had not heard those fatal words.

"Do not agitate yourself, my dear girl," answered Ursule, soothingly; "you will be able to speak in a few minutes. At the worst, you have only taken cold, which was very natural. Do not let a transient inconvenience discompose you."

Sylvie pressed her hand thankfully, and replied, in the same painful whisper, "I felt as though I should never speak again—as though I had lost my voice *for ever!*"

"What does she say? Why does she whisper? Why does she not speak out and let her poor afflicted mother hear her?" cried Madame de la Roche, testily.

"She has taken cold—it is nothing, nothing at all," replied Ursule; "she is too hoarse to speak loudly. When a person is suffering from hoarseness, it is very wrong to force the voice, or use it at all. Lie down, Sylvie, and do not try to speak one word; you will soon be better. Pray do not go on in that frantic manner, Madame de la Roche; you will excite the child, and increase her fever—pray, be quiet!"

"Increase her fever? She has a fever, then? But did I not say long ago that she would have? Did I not expect it? It has been coming on all this time, and soon it will increase; it is a mercy if we do not lose her!—a mercy which it is in vain *for us* to hope for!"

Ursule almost lost her temper at this ill-judged but characteristic speech; and could not help reflecting that, after all, there was as much justice as severity in Maitre Beaujeu's rebukes, which were never more needed than at that moment.

As if her thoughts had summoned him, his knock, though much softer than usual, was heard at the door.

The mother flew to open it, exclaiming, "It's all over with us! It has come at last! Oh! my poor Sylvie! my poor Sylvie!"

Beaujeu hurried past her into the inner chamber. Sylvie turned to him with a failing attempt to smile, and, stretching out her hands, murmured, "It is nothing—Ursule says I will be better soon."

"Dear child, why do you whisper?" gasped her teacher.

"I cannot speak! *I have lost my voice!*"

Beaujeu's violin dropped, and would have fallen to the ground had it not been caught by Ursule; he covered his face with his hands, and a groan that sounded like the sundering of heart-strings burst from his lips.

"It is nothing—only a cold—only a temporary calamity. In a week she will be herself," cried Ursule, consolingly.

"A week! and I have just made a regular engagement for her which commences before the close of this very week; and she is expected to sing every week for the next three months! If she is not able to fulfil the contract, they will be obliged to engage some one else to take her place! My child; my dear, dear child!"

The old man kissed her forehead again and again, and held her hot hands in his, and smoothed back her matted hair, and looked tenderly into her flushed face. The brilliant woman, who had excited his wonder and admiration last night, had vanished; she was his little, humble, dependent, unfortunate Sylvie again.

She did not seem to notice or to comprehend the intelligence he had just given. With eyes preternaturally bright, she glanced around the room in search of something, then stretched her arm towards the little table and tried to grasp a book. Ursule handed it to her—it was her Bible. From between the leaves she took a withered flower; no one present recognised the faded sprig of heliotrope. Beaujeu alone might have known from whence it came, but his mind was too full of distress for reminiscences that could have given the key to this action. She muttered incoherently as she held the scentless, colorless flower before her eyes; but the few words that could be distinguished conveyed no meaning—she had become delirious.

"I must summon a doctor at once," said Beaujeu, rising hastily. "Keep her quiet, good Ursule; and you, madam, if you have the slightest consideration for your child, you will not distress her and increase the fever from which she is suffering, by letting her see your grief."

If Madame de la Roche made any effort to act upon this suggestion, it was a vain attempt; and Ursule, finding that Sylvie, in brief moments of lucidity, looked at her mother inquiringly and with a troubled expression, insisted upon the latter's withdrawing to her own apartment.

She yielded, sobbing out, "And it has come to this! I am not to take care of my own child! Every one is to have charge of her, and to regulate her, but I."

Maitre Beaujeu soon returned with Dr. Souvestre, the youthful partner of a physician of high standing, who, being unable personally to attend to his numerous patients, allowed this young assistant to study his profession by practising among the poorer classes, taking or saving lives, as the case might be.

Dr. Souvestre examined the patient with genuine interest, and an assumption of importance and gravity by which he expected to inspire confidence and atone for the absence of grey hairs. Ursule replied to his numerous questions, for Madame de la Roche was either incapable of doing so, or chose to remain obstinately silent.

He casually asked, "Are you her mother, madame?" Then the weeping woman started forward and replied eagerly—"No—no—that she is not! *I* am her mother!—but they give me no power over her! I am nobody! I must see her die and not come to her aid."

"Since you are her mother, madame," replied the doctor with severity, "I must tell you that this violent ebullition is very harmful to *my patient.* I shall be obliged to order you from the apartment unless you are perfectly composed."

Poor Madame de la Roche felt that the doctor also was in league against her, and combining with the others to take her child out of her hands. Dr. Souvestre, without again noticing her, gave his directions to Ursule, wrote a prescription, and charged her not to allow Sylvie to be subjected to the least excitement.

Maitre Beaujeu left the room with him.

"Is she very ill, Doctor?" he inquired.

"I fear she is. The fever has evidently been produced by exposure to cold and wet, when her highly sensitive nervous system was in a state of violent excitement."

"But her voice—will she lose her voice?"

"I have not been able to judge of the extent to which her voice is affected, for, as you saw, she did not reply to any of my questions."

"It will not be *possible* for her to be well enough to keep an engagement to sing in a few days—do you think it will?"

Dr. Souvestre lifted his eyebrows, as though he were regarding a man not particularly sound in mind: "Decidedly not."

Beaujeu had not the heart, the courage, to go at once to Monsieur Le Grand and tell him that he must seek for some one to fill Sylvie's place. He absolved himself from that hard duty until the morrow.

That morrow brought no favorable change to Sylvie. Her fever still raged; her voice sank lower and lower; her words, unconnected and wild, were hardly audible at all.

Ursule, unsolicited, filled the post of nurse. Madame de la Roche became more useless than ever. Her husband spent most of his time in trying to prove that this illness could be nothing of importance; that she had simply caught cold when she was heated. He had often taken cold in the same way himself, he added. He was certain she would be restored in a few days—*he always was;* and as for her being a little out of her mind, fever always made *him* light-headed.

"And folly always keeps you so," muttered Beaujeu, gruffly.

It was now absolutely necessary that Monsieur Le Grand should be apprised of the calamity that had befallen the young singer. Maitre Beaujeu's services had been included in Sylvie's engagement. Though his skill as a performer on the violin was incontestable, his talents had not yet received that public recognition which constitutes *fame*, and he doubted whether, apart from Sylvie, he could obtain a hearing.

He made as light as possible of her illness to Monsieur Le Grand, assuring him that it was but a cold, brought on by walking in a pouring rain, owing to the disappearance of their conveyance.

"The indisposition of Mademoiselle de la Roche is a serious calamity at this moment, when she has created such an extraordinary sensation, and every one is on the *qui vive* to hear her. Her fortune was made. Are you sure she cannot appear? Could she not venture upon a single song? or repeat the Semiramide with Lablache on Thursday?"

"It will not be possible."

"How vexatious! This is very discomposing! I shall be obliged to engage some one else; but her really wonderful vocalization will render the public very difficult to please. I trust she will recover shortly. One of the disadvantages of our profession is, that if a favorite be not kept constantly before the audience, she is soon forgotten; and it is always hard to re-kindle an enthusiasm which has once died out."

"I will apprise you on the instant she is convalescent."

Maitre Beaujeu lingered and hesitated; nothing had been said about *his* expected performance. Le Grand was too much engrossed by the unlooked-for disappointment of being deprived of Sylvie, to think of the interests of her tutor.

At last Beaujeu compelled himself to say, with as much indifference as possible: "Allow me to ask whether my services will be needed on Thursday, as before arranged, or whether my engagement depends upon that of Mademoiselle de la Roche?"

Monsieur Le Grand was too admirable a diplomatist not to remember that, as Maitre Beaujeu controlled his pupil, and his pupil would be eagerly sought after by the public, the most politic compliment he could pay the master was to assume that he was held in high consideration wholly independent of his valuable scholar.

"What a question!" exclaimed the wily principal, with well feigned surprise. "Of course *your* engagement holds good without the least reference to that of Mademoiselle de la Roche. We could not dispense with you on any account. By-the-by, allow me to pay you the two hundred francs due. These bad tidings concerning Mademoiselle de la Roche have made me very forgetful."

He counted out the money, and took Beaujeu's receipt.

The music-teacher withdrew in the most grateful mood that he had ever experienced. But what was he to do with Sylvie's hundred francs? If he delivered them to her father, they would certainly be squandered; with her mother they would be equally unsafe, for she would yield them to her husband; Sylvie could have no voice in the matter at this moment.

"No voice!" The words, used casually, gave him a sharp pang.

He determined to take Ursule into his confidence, and abide by her advice. As she was always at Sylvie's side, he was obliged to request her to grant him a brief interview in her own room. Had she been less absorbed by the state of her beloved charge, the old maid would have suffered no little trepidation in consenting to this strange petition; as it was, there was no room in her mind for thoughts of self. When Beaujeu made known his dilemma, she strongly urged him to retain the money, without making any allusion to its having been paid; adding, that if it once passed into the hands of Monsieur de la Roche, it would melt as surely as though it were thrown into a fiery furnace.

"But Sylvie must not lack any comfort," answered Beaujeu.

"I will take care that she does not," replied Ursule. "But her spendthrift father probably has something left of that last hundred francs, the larger portion of which he has amused his mind by throwing away. I will insist upon his expending what remains upon necessary medicines; it will be so much saved."

Ursule found herself mistaken.

When Monsieur de la Roche returned home that very day, it was not with empty hands. He asked his wife for a dish, then daintily uncovered the fanciful basket he carried, and heaped the coarse piece of crockery which was placed on the table with luscious hot-house peaches.

"Now let me have your largest jar filled with water," demanded he, in a tone of pleasant excitement.

The fractured brown jug was silently placed before him. In that he carefully inserted the stems of a costly bouquet. Next he unfolded a paper parcel, and displayed the last new novel, in three volumes, by Eugene Sue.

"You see I've done *my* part towards taking care of the dear child. Those peaches are just the thing for her to relish; and she delights in flowers; this bouquet will charm her. This novel I mean to read aloud to her myself, to amuse her. It is said to be a thrilling narrative, and we shall enjoy all the marvellous incidents and hair-breadth escapes together. The basket is so pretty, that I thought I would buy that, too. It may be of use to hold your work, Marguerite," and he tossed a flimsy wicker-basket towards his wife.

Ursule, who had been impatiently watching the self-satisfied prodigal, now said, in a tone full of quiet irony:

"I really congratulate you upon the felicitous choice of your purchases; the peaches will probably spoil before Sylvie is able to taste one! The dôctor happened to notice the bouquets with which she was so liberally supplied last night, and ordered all flowers to be removed from the room, as hurtful to his patient; so these must go—anywhere you please—out of the window if you like, unless, indeed, you think it was worth spending the sum they cost to bestow them upon *me*. As for the novel, she could neither listen to nor comprehend a single page at present; and, when she is convalescent, I promise you Dr. Souvestre will not allow any work as exciting as the tales of Eugene Sue to be perused in her hearing. Of the basket, I wish you joy, Madame de la Roche; though you have a rather more substantial one by your side."

Monsieur de la Roche looked blank for an instant, but quickly recovered.

Ursule went on mercilessly:

"Now will you have the goodness to give me five francs to pay for the medicine that Dr. Souvestre charged me to procure?"

"Five francs for medicines—what a sum!" exclaimed Everard, drawing out his purse, which was evidently in a state of collapse. "Really, I—I believe—I am not quite certain—yes, it is so, indeed; I have but two francs left!"

"Is Sylvie to go without her medicine, then?" asked Ursule, with tantalizing coolness."

"Of course not—certainly not—that is out of the question," replied De la Roche, wincing.

"It is equally out of the question to procure it without money," she returned, sharply.

"Then we must *borrow*—that is our only resource," he answered, with returning hopefulness. "Let me see; Maitre Beaujeu cannot be afraid to trust us, for there will be a hundred francs passing through his hands for Sylvie, and he can reimburse himself. By-the-by, I wonder why Monsieur Le Grand has not paid up yet. I have a great mind to call on him; but it does not do to let such people know that one is out of funds. It is better to apply to Beaujeu. I would rather not ask him myself, but *you* will do it for me, my good, kind Ursule? *You* are always so *ready*, so *obliging*, so *friendly*——"

Ursule interrupted his flattery with—

"For her sake, I undertake to arrange that matter."

And she did. She arranged with Beaujeu to retain Sylvie's money, yet to allow as much as was needed, from time to time, seemingly in the shape of a loan. Quite a masterly stroke, by which Monsieur de la Roche was outwitted without suspecting her generalship.

CHAPTER X.

THE OLD MUSICIAN.

DAY followed day, week fled after week, but Sylvie still lay withering under the torrid heat of fever, hourly becoming weaker, and giving no sign of consciousness, though her burning lips ceaselessly moved in soundless mutterings.

One might almost have imagined that it was a gratification to Madame de la Roche to be visited by a positive affliction. The certainty of an actual evil seemed more endurable than the vague dread of some menacing calamity. Then her sad auguries had proved prophetic;—*that* was a cause for self-complacency; and no one could contradict her when she maintained that adversity dogged their steps;—*that* was a decided satisfaction. She was comparatively cheerful under the real, tangible trial, though in the midst of flattering prospects she had been causelessly depressed, and ever watching for possible misfortunes, which loomed up darkly in the distant horizon.

Her husband had refused, as long as he could, to believe that Sylvie's illness was serious; but, as week after week slowly wore away, and even his hopeful vision failed to trace the slightest improvement in her condition, he became silent and gloomy, and almost forsook his home, as though he could fly from its troubles by not witnessing them.

Maitre Beaujeu's character, in which growing tenderness for Sylvie had long since commenced a gradual, harmonizing change, was now completely softened by sorrow. Her confiding affection, her appreciating devotion, had penetrated through the hardness, roughness, bitterness of his external husk, into the inner, better nature that lay buried like a sweet kernel within a tough and prickly rind. Her soft hand had struck chords deep in his soul which never before gave forth a sound—and, but for *her* wakening touch, might have remained mute as death, even *until* death. He had never loved any human being as he loved this patient, clinging, steady-hearted girl. He looked *down* upon her with paternal protection, and looked *up* to her with reverence that recognised her higher, purer mould. His attachment for her touched the secret spring of his long-closed heart, and opened its doors to the rest of mankind;—he hated others less because he loved her better every day;—he was more kindly disposed towards all the world, because the holy mantle of her broad charity swept about his feet. Grief, now mingling with love, melted him to such wondrous gentleness that even Mathieu dared to approach him with anxious inquiries concerning the now silent songstress, who had made all the music of the poor cripple's untuned existence.

Beaujeu was moved by his desolate look and despairing tone, and compelled himself to answer so cheerfully, that the heavy shadows upon the boy's countenance grew lighter as he listened, and the old man learned, for the first time, that there was comfort in comforting.

Sylvie's sudden disappearance from the scene of her triumphs had not proved as detrimental to her tutor's prosperity as might reasonably have been expected. He was now a regular member of Monsieur Le Grand's *corps*, frequently appearing before critical audiences, and, as his musical talent, cultivation, and skill grew more and more apparent, steadily winning laurels. All that he had heretofore lacked had been a fair field upon which he could prove his claims to public favor, and he had struggled through half a century without ever planting his foot on that desired ground —the Canaan of the musician! Alas! how many of the noteless gifted toil through long lives, uncrowned and unknown, simply because the opportunity to test their powers is never accorded!

Perhaps, after all, it was as needful that the musician's hairs should whiten before his fingers caught the wizard touch that played at once upon heart-strings and upon those of his instrument, as that his violin should require years to gain that exquisite mellowness of tone which it now possessed; for the *old* violin is endowed with a potent sweetness which age only can confer, and which therefore never belongs to the *new*.

The "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" tells us that there are fifty-eight different pieces in a violin, and that "those pieces are strangers to each other; and it takes a century, more or less, to make them thoroughly acquainted. At last they learn to vibrate in harmony, and the instrument becomes an organic whole, as it were, a great capsule which had grown from a garden-bed in Cremona or elsewhere. Besides, the wood is juicy and full of sap for fifty years or so, but at the end of fifty or a hundred more gets tolerably dry and comparatively resonant." Let us not, then, quarrel with time, which gives melody, not to the violin only, but to every human instrument, when its construction is fine and susceptible of that gradual progress towards perfection which God orders, and only jarring natures rebel against.

Sylvie had been ill for a month, when one morning Ursule, who was sitting beside her, chanced to look up from her work, and found the invalid gazing at her with a totally changed expression. Her eyes, though strangely sunken and far too large for her face, were clear, and calm, and sane; the wild lights had faded out of them; the fiery spot that had glowed upon her cheeks until it seemed to have burnt the hollows now visible, was quenched in ashy whiteness; her lips were lightly closed, no longer *compressed*, as they had been of late, when not moving speechlessly. The small, transparent hands were lying placidly on the coverlet.

Her eyes wandered from Ursule's face over the bed-covering, and then around the room, as though they were searching for something just laid down. With returning consciousness, her mind had gone back to the last thought by which it was occupied when reason forsook her, and her gaze rested finally on the little Bible. Ursule, without permitting herself to betray the least surprise, handed the volume, opening it at the place where the pressed flower lay between the leaves. She was rewarded by a smile—the first she had beheld for many weeks.

The next moment Sylvie, laying her hand upon the open page, moved her lips; then an expression of sudden anguish passed over her face.

With a violent effort she whispered, "My voice! my voice! Have I lost my voice?"

Ursule could not command her own to reply.

A shuddering spasm convulsed the young girl's frame, as she wildly tried to force the sounds, which died unuttered in her throat.

Ursule quickly regained her self-possession, and said, "I am so thankful to see you better, dear! You have been very ill."

"How long?" murmured Sylvie, indistinctly.

"More than a month."

After a moment of amazement, Sylvie appeared to be trying to collect her thoughts. She asked, speaking very slowly, but in the same choked tone, "Have—I—lost—my—voice—*for ever?*"

"Heaven forbid!" replied Ursule, cheeringly. "Now that you have passed the crisis, we may dare to believe that it will be restored."

Blessed are the words of hope, even when hope is faint—groundless—unreal;—still words that can inspire hope, however fallacious, are full of consolation—full of vitality. Ursule's words not only soothed Sylvie, but imparted new strength to her feeble frame, new courage to her sinking spirit.

Madame de la Roche, who was in her own apartment, having caught the sound of Ursule's voice, now entered. When she saw Sylvie looking perfectly rational, with a passionate burst she threw herself on her knees beside the bed, exclaiming, "My child! my own! my only one! Are you indeed spared? Are you better? Do you know your poor, broken-hearted mother?"

Sylvie's answering caresses replied for her.

"Speak to me! Speak to me!" cried Madame de la Roche, embracing her fondly.

Sylvie only sighed.

"You cannot? Your voice—your beautiful voice is gone, then? Ah! will it ever return?"

"If it be God's will!" whispered Sylvie, and her white face grew angelic with the look which said that she could wait for that will to be made apparent—wait and hope—wait, if needs be, *without hope.*

Dr. Souvestre and Maitre Beaujeu now entered. The instant Sylvie caught sight of the latter, she feebly stretched her arms towards him, but they dropped powerless upon the bed; Ursule divined her intention, and, as the musician bent over her joyfully, lifted up the weak, nerveless arms, and they clasped themselves about his neck.

His face was buried in the bed-covering, and his frame shook as though he were weeping. If tears of joy could not find their way to eyes, the channels of which half a century had dried, the freshening drops fell inwardly, and revived his parched spirit.

The hand of Dr. Souvestre upon his shoulder roused him, and he rose, exclaiming, "I'm an old fool! I know it! But it is this little witch who has worried me into my dotage. But now we will have no more nonsense;—she will get well, will she not, doctor?"

The young physician, who, as usual, endeavored to make up for his lack of years by a great assumption of dignity, did not think fit too hastily to endorse this unprofessional opinion. With a solemn and stately air, he merely desired Maitre Beaujeu, who was nearest to the patient, to have the goodness to stand aside.

Seating himself by Sylvie's bed, the youthful Esculapius placed his fingers deliberately on her pulse, and asked, "Do you know me, Mademoiselle Sylvie?"

She shook her head in the negative.

"Do you remember seeing me when you were taken ill?"

Still a negative motion of the head.

"Do you find yourself unable to speak?"

She answered by a slight involuntary compression of her quivering lips, and a gentle bow.

The doctor, after extending his examination to a period which Maitre Beaujeu thought needlessly protracted, turned to the trio, who were impatiently waiting for his decision, and, with a self-satisfied and somewhat pompous intonation, said, "I am happy to pronounce my patient out of danger, and to give you hope of her steady convalescence."

"But her *voice!* What is her health without her *voice?*" ejaculated the mother, who, as soon as the sun began to shine, hunted after the clouds with which she had such a natural affinity.

What a wicked look Beaujeu gave her!

"She must not attempt to force her voice in any way," replied the doctor. "Let her write whatever she wishes to communicate."

"But what is to become of her unless you can restore her voice, and she can sing again?"

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, madame. It will be time enough by-and-by to test what medical science can effect towards the restoration of her vocal chords, which are now partially paralysed. I congratulate myself that she is progressing very favorably at present. My orders are that she is to be kept very quiet, and not allowed to make the least attempt to speak."

He turned towards Ursule as he uttered these last words, intimating that he regarded *her* as the responsible person; and, gravely bowing, withdrew.

Beaujeu again seated himself by Sylvie's side. She placed her hand in his and whispered:

"What a disappointment for you!"

"Little rebel! are you not forbidden to speak? Do not let me see you open your lips again. If you will be very quiet, I will tell you all that has happened since you were taken ill."

Sylvie looked as though she would have said: "That is just what I most desire."

Her master went on:

"My disappointment *has*, indeed, been great; but not so great as my sorrow at beholding you suffer. And, though I am a thankless old brute by nature, I have had much to make me grateful. In spite of your illness, Monsieur Le Grand continues my engagement."

Sylvie's eyes sparkled.

"Ah! I knew you would rejoice, therefore I told you *that* first. I am prospering—gaining ground with the public—making friends, and obtaining scholars. And do I not owe all this to the magical voice that melodiously spoke the *open sesame*, and thrust the old man into the arena to battle for its prizes? Do I not owe it to that studious little pupil who first drew attention to her obscure master? And though she only flashed like a meteor across the musical firmament and disappeared, did she not leave a trail of light that ever points to him?"

Sylvie clasped her hands, and no voice was needed to speak her joy.

"But do not suppose the lost Pleiad is forgotten. There are numberless eyes always looking to see it again, and numberless voices constantly accosting me to know if there are signs of its reappearance."

Sylvie's eyes plainly inquired:

"Who asks for me?

"You would like to know *who?* Why, every one! Monsieur Le Grand asks after you every time he sees me; and the vocalists who envied you, and are glad you are out of their way, make most *tender* inquiries after your health, always hoping to receive the satisfactory answer that you are no better. You look incredulous, neverthless it is the truth. Then Mademoiselle Belle-Chasse, who is filling your place as you once filled hers, and who is terribly afraid you will not die, makes more particular and *affectionate* inquiries than any one else; and I always take care to tell her that you will startle the world again before long. Besides these, you have many genuine admirers who ask after you."

Sylvie could not help whispering:

"Who?"

"Will you be silent, and obey orders? Imagine yourself dumb; or can't you do anything so unnatural to womankind?" Maitre Beaujeu tried to laugh at his own joke, but signally failed. "You want to know who inquires? There's the Count Castellane for one; and the Duke de —— for another; and Mademoiselle de St. Amar never tires of asking after you, and talking about you."

A faint rose-hue suffused Sylvie's face, and she sighed softly.

"And her brother, Monsieur le Marquis, has several times sought me to know if you are improving. I hear he is a passionate lover of music, and I made up my mind long since that he is a fine critic. Now I must leave you for awhile, as I have several lessons to give. But did I tell you who had become one of my pupils? I am solely indebted to the sensation you created for that one, and probably she expects me to make her as great a singer as you are, though her voice compares with yours precisely as a very tiny, sweet-toned pipe compares with a superb church organ."

"Who is it?" whispered Sylvie.

"Disobeying again? Then I really think it is time to leave you; besides, it is past the hour for Mademoiselle Honorine's lesson."

Sylvie's eyes opened wide with astonishment, and she drew a long breath.

"I have just commenced teaching the little elf; she has a capital ear and fine taste, but her voice is as small as her fairy-like self; a good-sized cricket would drown it by chirping. Shall I give her a message from you?"

Sylvie made an effort to speak.

"Don't! don't! What an old idiot I was to tempt you! I will invent something that will do quite as well; now, adieu. I shall see you again before night."

Sylvie would have lifted his hand to her lips, but she had not strength. Without noticing the action, he departed.

After her master left, she made no further attempt to speak. Ursule brought her some light nourishment; she reluctantly swallowed a few mouthfuls, and then lay back with closed eyes. Her mother thought she was slumbering, but she was only musing over the past, and counting the blessings granted her in spite of this crushing blow. When she thought of her master, and the bright future opened to him through her humble instrumentality, the sense of gratitude overpowered all other emotions; and she thanked God that she had been able to sing even those three nights, and felt that the loss of her voice was not too great a price to pay for her beloved teacher's prosperity.

Twilight was casting long shadows when Beaujeu returned. The curtain, that divided off Sylvie's room from the general chamber, was thrown back, that she might have free air. She knew his step, and opened her eyes when he entered, and watched him without venturing to utter a word. He laid his violin on the bed, then unfolded a small parcel, and took out a porcelain slate, with a tiny silver pencil attached to it by a silken cord.

"There! This pencil," said he, "is to be the jailor of your tongue. You are to write whatever you wish to communicate; but recollect that you are to keep the unruly member in prison until the doctor sets it at liberty. Now, let us see what comes next."

He took her wasted hand in his, and gently slid upon her finger the ruby ring.

An irrepressible exclamation of surprise and joy broke from her lips.

"Take care—not a word! We are to have no talking—and no writing either, just now," he added, as Sylvie grasped the pencil which her trembling fingers could not have guided. "You can have nothing to say—there is *your ring*—and there is *my violin*—the two truants both returned; we are quits; comment is superfluous. You shall only listen while the old violin and its master tell you of their joy in the language which you comprehend best."

Beaujeu opened the case and took out the venerable instrument, and, as with masterly hand he woke its witching voice, now to strains of exultation—now of tenderest pathos—now of holy thanksgiving, Sylvie listened as one enchanted; but, though her eyes seemed fastened on the musician's time-scarred visage, it was not that face she saw—another countenance, conjured up by penetrating sounds which drew forth the image deepest in her soul, rose up between and shut out the less captivating reality.

How long he would have played, and how long she would have listened, it is not easy to divine. The candle had been lighted for some time, the night was advancing, but neither Sylvie nor her master had commenced to grow weary, when their enjoyment met with the jarring interruption of Monsieur de la Roche's entrance.

Maitre Beaujeu rose and, hastily closing Sylvie's curtain, passed out to meet her father, and after telling him of the cheering change in her state, earnestly charged him not to excite his daughter, and to beware how he induced her to speak. Beaujeu was strongly inclined to remain during the interview between parent and child; but doubtful of his own ability to control his temper, he contented himself with giving a significant glance at Ursule, and left the room.

His admonitions were wasted on Monsieur de la Roche; the quicksilver of his mental thermometer suddenly mounted to fever heat; and, at his daughter's side, his ecstasy found vent in all manner of fantastic extravagances, until Ursule, with the authority of an established nurse, interfered, and finally expelled him from the apartment, threatening not to open the door to him again that night if he did not moderate his joyful demonstrations.

CHAPTER XI.

CONVALESCENCE.

When the Sabbath ushered in another week, Sylvie was able to rise from her couch. Propped by pillows in an antiquated arm-chair belonging to Ursule, she sat by the window, listening to the music of church bells, and gazing upon the little pot of mignonette that still stood upon the window-sill, though Dr. Souvestre had sternly issued a decree for the banishment of all flowers from the sick chamber. There was nothing else visible upon which her beauty-loving eyes could rest with passing pleasure. Dingy house-tops and congregations of chimneys hemmed in the prospect. The faintly-colored, straggling mignonette looked feeble and drooping, for it had often lacked care, or been thrust aside, or forgotten, during her illness. Sylvie involuntarily compared the sickly plant, which now sent forth no perceptible odor, to herself.

"A little sunshine and water," she mused, "will revive this poor flower, and call forth its lost perfume;—are there no strengthening and freshening influences to restore my voice? Ah! I remember well, it was this humble little flower, that, blooming in secret, charmed me by its gift of fragrance, and inspired the hope that, despite my own obscurity and lowliness, *my gift* would not be wasted."

Sylvie's health now slowly but steadily improved. Each day she grew stronger, but no sign gave the faintest promise of restoration to her vocal powers. She seldom essayed to speak; the effort had so often proved futile that, little by little, a disinclination to make the attempt grew upon her. She communicated her wishes, or made replies, by the most eloquent pantomime; and, when that wordless medium proved insufficient, the porcelain slate and little silver pencil of Maitre Beaujeu were in requisition.

Dame Manot, Mathieu, and a few other unpretending but devoted friends, were permitted to visit her; yet all their tender inquiries, and touching words of sympathy, conjured no chance sound from her lips. That she was *mute*, appeared to her a matter of course; not that she did not cherish the deep, underlying hope that this spell of silence would one day be broken; but a heavenly voice within whispered, that by unmurmuringly accepting the present, and trusting in the future, she could alone receive the good made possible to unrebellious spirits. God's patience, which lightens sorrow through *endurance*, not *combat*, sank softly into her meek and chastened soul. A holy trust preserved her from ever doubting the wisdom which permitted her affliction—a trust which does not only deem *that* blest which we *receive*, but believes greater blessings are oftentimes sent through that which we lose.

> "'God bless all our *gains*,' say we;
> But 'God bless all our *losses*,'
> Better suits with our degree."

Sylvie soon began to experience that delightful sense of convalescence which makes an invalid feel as if the whole system were freshened and renewed. It seemed to her as though her soul grew stronger, and more largely fitted for life's manifold purposes, as its delicate receptacle gained new vigor.

This pleasant state was often broken in upon by her mother's contrarious moods, which tested all the patience, trust, and spiritual strength that Sylvie had acquired.

On one occasion, when Maitre Beaujeu's magical violin had aroused her to a pitch of musical ecstasy, Madame de la Roche took advantage of a momentary pause to say, "I have been waiting some time, Maitre Beaujeu, to make a suggestion of importance; you must excuse my taking this opportunity. I want to speak to you about that *piano!* Here the cumbersome old thing has been occupying space, and eating up gold, unopened, for nearly two months. It always *was* hard work to pay for its hire, and *now* what it costs is money quite thrown into the gutter. *Sylvie will never need it more*, for she only played accompaniments to her songs, and there's no chance of her singing again in a hurry. I think the piano ought to be sent home! Won't you oblige me by attending to this matter?"

The rude shock of these words sent a convulsive shudder through Sylvie's frame, and her quivering lips moved without sound, as her nerveless fingers grasped her pencil.

Beaujeu dived into his snuffbox, and a liberal and vehement snuffing of its contents partially smothered a sound very much like the gnash of teeth blended with a muttered oath.

But tenderness towards Sylvie had taught him self-control when he was irritated by her mother, and he answered, in a calmly caustic tone, " Your prudence is highly commendable, madame ; I will attend to the piano. *Until* I send for it, you will be good enough to leave the instrument where it now stands ; but it is understood that *you* give it up from to-day, and it will henceforth cost you nothing."

" I shall feel more satisfied when it is *gone*, for there is no use of nourishing false hopes," resumed Madame de la Roche, pertinaciously. " It's a deal better to make up one's mind at once that there is *no hope*, and I am sure there never was any for *us*. Yet there's Sylvie, who, in spite of all we have undergone, and notwithstanding her own misfortune, persists in saying that she don't believe in *luck*."

Sylvie wrote upon her slate, in reply, " I do not believe in *luck*, simply because I do not believe in *chance*, and I *do* believe in *God*. The ways of God are mysterious—inscrutable—but God cannot be *wrong*."

" Oh ! that's a very proper theory," replied her mother, glancing over the words Sylvie had traced ; " but I don't see that it proves itself when all one's best intentions are frustrated, and all one's most prudent and promising plans are brought to nought."

Sylvie wrote, "We have hoped great things; we have sown, as we thought, the seed for a great harvest; if God choose that our large hopes should wear the shape of small realities—if it be His will that the harvest should wither before it ripen—He who is never *motiveless* has an end in view which our clay-clouded vision cannot yet behold. We have only to be willing to receive the small gifts He sends, instead of the great ones we coveted, and be patient until our eyes are opened to see God's reason for allowing us this much and no more."

"That is easy preaching, hard practising," resumed the mother, shaking her head mistrustfully. "There is no getting over the fact that all the good gifts of this life are very unequally distributed."

Sylvie paused awhile, as though musing upon this *seeming* truth, then took up her pencil, softly smiling as she wrote, "*Not* unequally *in reality*, however unequal the distribution may *appear*. If every one is allowed just the amount of success and prosperity—is subjected to just the degree of trial or temptation—is placed in precisely the situation which will develop his true character, bring out his evil inclinations through exciting causes, that he may become aware of and conquer them, and call forth his noble attributes, that they may be perfected by use, can we call men's allotted portions unequal? If to fit man for the highest possible felicity which he is capable of experiencing, here and hereafter, be the great end of existence, can we talk of *inequality* when that end is obtained?"

Madame de la Roche read aloud what Sylvie had written, and ejaculated: "I cannot imagine where the child gets her singular ideas. She grows a deal too wise for her mother's simple comprehension. But, with all her superior understanding, I don't think her logic will ever convince me that there was any necessity for *our* misfortunes. I'll never believe that it was *for the best* that she should suddenly be struck *dumb*, just as all Paris had gone crazy about her voice! And I cannot see what good is to come of our being lifted to the topmost pinnacle of hope, to be cast down to the lowest depths of despair. No, I maintain I shall never see any good in *that*."

Sylvie not only believed in, but she had begun to see that hidden good which her mother resolutely doubted. An involuntary self-examination had been the result of the many long reveries into which she had fallen during her convalescence, and had revealed how injurious to her own character might have proved the "tinsel clink of compliments" that had sounded in her ears, the homage that had lifted her to startling heights in her own estimation, the perils by which she had been surrounded in an atmosphere of adulation—perils which she might not have been strong enough to encounter.

Then her father—she vainly tried to close her eyes upon the conviction that his reckless prodigality could only be stemmed by the check of poverty. She did not want to admit to herself that this first harsh lesson was sent to *him*, also, because through privation and adversity he could alone be made aware of his inconsequent extravagance, or be taught the most common prudence, or be inspired with a sense of the honesty of economy.

Sylvie was now able to walk about the chamber; and, if her mother had permitted, she would have resumed some of her former duties.

Dr. Souvestre, who had attended her daily, and made numerous experiments upon her throat, exhausting the virtues of caustic and iodine and other potent agents, finally pronounced that she was well enough to receive benefit from fresh air, and ordered her to drive out several times every week.

This opinion had been given the day before the first of November, which is set apart for the great *fête* of All Saints' Day.

That general holiday was most welcome to Maitre Beaujeu, for it afforded him a period of rare freedom. The number of his pupils had so rapidly increased that he had little leisure, and the moments devoted to Sylvie were snatched at intervals between his lessons. As soon as he heard the doctor's order, Maitre Beaujeu determined to see it obeyed. *Père la Chaise* is the usual resort of the Parisian populace upon this particular *fête* day, but Maitre Beaujeu decided to carry Sylvie to the *Jardin des Plantes*, as a locality where the crowd would be avoided, and she could enjoy air and exercise with more freedom.

In so gentle a tone that no one who had only heard him address others could have recognised his voice, he said to her: "Would not you and Ma'm'selle Ursule like to pass a day beneath the trees, and listen to the birds instead of to a worse musician? If you would, we will go to the *Jardin des Plantes* to morrow. There—there—no need of writing your answer"—as she took up her pencil; "your face has replied, and I will come for you to-morrow at ten."

Maitre Beaujeu had now obtained such decided influence over the parents of Sylvie, who felt how much depended upon his good-will, that neither of them threw any obstacle in the way of his project.

Sylvie had given no thought to her toilette, or rather she had not remembered that her scanty wardrobe would not allow her to make a presentable appearance. But as her health was gradually restored, Ursule had ventured to suggest to Beaujeu that his *protegée* would need additions to her wardrobe. The hundred francs to the young singer had been exhausted during her illness, but the trustworthy dress-maker was ordered to look upon the musician as Sylvie's banker, and received a *carte blanche* to purchase whatever was necessary for her health, her comfort, or her toilette.

On the morning of the fête, Ursule entered the young girl's room before she had risen, and placed beside her a neatly folded bundle and a bandbox. While Sylvie watched her visitor with wondering eyes, the latter complacently, and with tantalizing deliberation, extracted pin after pin from the cover of the package, and then drew forth a black silk dress, a paletot to match, a neat linen chemisette with sleeves, a pair of dainty gaiters, and gloves. Then she opened the bandbox and exhibited a black velvet bonnet ornamented only with a bunch of pansies in the white cap within. Ursule had consulted economy as well as elegance in the choice of attire, and had duly reflected that black silk would be unexceptionable on many occasions that would necessarily present themselves if Sylvie returned to her artist-life, and would outwear many other materials.

"Now get up, and let us see how the dress fits. I made it by your old measure," said Ursule, gaily. "As for the bonnet, I am sure that will become you. Do you not approve of my choice?"

Sylvie nodded in the affirmative, but extended her hand for her slate, an action that seemed to indicate that her surprise and pleasure were mingled with some uneasiness. Ursule stopped her, after the style of Maitre Beaujeu; it was odd to see how often she copied his manners.

"I know what you want to ask. You are such a mercenary little individual, you are troubled about my extravagance. Set your heart at rest. Ever since you have been ill, Maitre Beaujeu has furnished me at intervals with portions of the hundred francs that Monsieur Le Grand paid to him for you, and I flatter myself that I have expended what was entrusted to me with praiseworthy economy. As for the grand toilette you are to make to-day, that is a matter arranged between Maitre Beaujeu and myself."

That Ursule's taste was irreproachable, and Sylvie's attire became her, the compliment which her æsthetic teacher *looked*, but did not *utter*, bore ample testimony.

In her new attire her figure seemed taller, more womanly, and the gracefully-cut paletot concealed its exceeding slenderness. The sweet, pure face that looked out from its surrounding of black velvet, like the picture of some virgin saint from a sombre frame, was spiritualized by the very pallor of the countenance and the absence of rounded outlines. The great blue eyes shone with the celestial softness of a sorrow accepted and meekly borne. Upon the lips was the seal of peace, breaking their characteristic firmness into a half smile.

It was a glorious autumn day; the air was slightly bracing but not cold; the golden sunlight tinged all creation with a Midas touch, yet did not oppress with its fervor, or dazzle with its brilliancy.

The last time Maitre Beaujeu had officiated as his gifted pupil's escort, his narrow means had permitted him to provide only a common *fiacre*, but now a *voiture de remise*, the nearest approach to a private carriage that could be obtained, stood at the humble entrance. Not that elegance had any weight with the old musician; it was the comfort of his dear invalid, and the fitness of the conveyance as regarded her, that he alone consulted.

As he carefully conducted her down the steep stairs, with what a rush of emotion she recalled *that night* when she had darted lightly up those steps, her elastic feet winged by excitement, her heart wildly throbbing with undefined hopes, her whole frame vibrating with the echo of prophecies of future greatness which had electrified her ears! *That night*, when her soul had sprung up, full statured of a sudden, and pierced through its chrysalis clay, and floated in an atmosphere of sunshine and flowers, freighted with sweet scents and delicious sounds! *That night*, when her spirit first recognised its fellowship with beings of a loftier sphere through the might of music, and the freemasonry of genius!

Maitre Beaujeu knocked at Ursule's door in passing, and she came forth at the summons, ready for the drive.

Beside the carriage steps, holding open the door, stood Mathieu, in his best threadbare suit. Sylvie smilingly saluted him, as she took her seat; Ursule sat down beside her; but before Beaujeu ascended to his place, he said to the boy:

"Now up with you by the driver!"

The late cynic, having once tasted the sweetness of imparting happiness, was often moved by an impulse to drink deeper of the sacred chalice. And yet he was half-ashamed of his kind promptings. He would never have thought of excusing his own *rudeness* or *hardness;* but now he said, apologetically:

"I thought the little hunchback might be of service if we wanted any one to wait upon us, or go upon an errand. He has evinced such absolute devotion to you during your illness, and the little monkey is such a devotee to our art, that, as it costs nothing, I thought it would do no harm to let him have a drive; though, of course, I take him *chiefly for the sake of his services.*"

Sylvie comprehended her master too well to answer, save by a look of thanks.

Encircled by Ursule's supporting arm, she leaned back in the carriage, striving to calm the agitation produced by the vivid recollections that crowded into her brain.

The fresh, invigorating air caressed her flushing cheeks, and cooled her brow; the easy motion of the carriage soothed her, and lulled the pain of too busy thoughts, until her wonted tranquillity gradually returned.

Beaujeu, as he silently contemplated his opposite companions, wondered how he could ever have fancied Sylvie's countenance positively ugly, and the face of her warm-hearted friend too plain for his fastidious eyes to dwell upon.

Ursule's physiognomy was so sympathetic, so trust-inspiring, that it seemed impossible for one to whom it was familiar to deem it homely. Yet not a single lineament was susceptible of description. Her eyes were neither large nor small, neither light nor dark, but of a nameless, nondescript color. Her forehead was neither high nor low, nor broad, nor narrow. Her nose was neither of the classic aquiline nor intellectual Roman, nor the vulgar snub, nor the *piquante* turn-up order.

It was simply an ordinary nose. Her mouth had no more marked peculiarity of shape; it was just a commonplace mouth. Yet something subtly shining out from within, gave light and life to all her features, blended them into harmony, and endowed them with the capacity of multiform expression. In her person, too, there was the same absence of emphasis. She was neither tall nor short, nor plump, nor thin—all her proportions were mediocre. But neutral tints were merely her outward coloring, and not the painting of her mental mould. A tender heart, united to a strong common sense (better defined as the most uncommon kind of sense), gave force to her whole character, and combined a quick perception of what was just and right with a merciful leaning towards the side of gentleness, and an unselfish consideration for the well-being of others.

The drive seemed only too short for the silent party, who appeared to need no words to communicate to each other their quiet but deep enjoyment. When they reached the *Jardin des Plantes*, Beaujeu entrusted to Mathieu a covered basket and a blanket-shawl, and the boy's mouth-stretching, eye-kindling delight was greatly increased by the discovery that he could actually be of service.

Carriages are not permitted to enter the gates; and Sylvie, to her regret, found herself too feeble to visit the noteworthy objects which attract curious crowds to this celebrated garden. She had hardly traversed one of those beautiful alleys where interlacing branches of tall trees shut out the mid-day sun, when her feet faltered and her head drooped, like a flower too heavy for its stem; her scanty stock of strength was exhausted.

Maitre Beaujeu spread the blanket-shawl on the soft green grass, beneath a magnificent clump of sugar maples, and made her and Ursule sit down. He reclined at a little distance, and Mathieu stood leaning against a tree, keeping watch over the unopened basket, and finding abundant happiness in gazing at Sylvie, unrebuked and unnoticed.

Some remark of Ursule's struck the rock of Beaujeu's pent-up conversational powers, and the stream gushed forth with a sparkling freedom that amazed the admiring spinster. Her former awe had somewhat melted away, and it was now wholly dissolved by this genial flow, which seemed the involuntary out pouring of feelings and reflections soul-prisoned for years.

Ursule's ingenuous tongue was the key to her heart, and the former was soon set in motion and the latter unlocked.

The reminiscences of the autumnal couple naturally travelled back to that sweet spring-time over which memory casts her mellowing and felicitous light. Many were the anecdotes they related of their by-gone days, until each felt as though youth had, for the moment, returned, and brought back some of its quick throbbings, and joyful exhilaration, and bright glancings at life, and careless disdain of tyrannous form.

Sylvie did not regret that she had forgotten her porcelain slate, for it allowed her to commune with her own thoughts. She sat reclining against a reddening maple-tree, gazing up at the blue sky, through the golden and crimson canopy of quivering autumn leaves, and looking as though her soul were pouring forth anthems of thanksgiving. She had not the remotest conception of the length of time she had been sitting thus, when Beaujeu signed to Mathieu to bring him the basket, and, with Ursule's assistance, a delicate collation was spread upon the smooth turf. Dainty bits of cold fowl, thin slices of tongue, snowy rolls and biscuits, light cake, a few *bonbons*, and a small bottle of *vin ordinaire*.

Mathieu played the Ganymede; and as Sylvie's position required him to kneel down to help her, the reverential action appeared to be the spontaneous manifestation of his own emotion.

Her reverie was broken by his comical appearance while offering her a plate in this lowly attitude. Her sense of the ludicrous provoked, but kindness repressed, her mirth, and Mathieu did not suspect the merriment he excited. The air and the drive had sharpened her usually dull appetite, and the repast was partaken of with a novel relish.

Lengthening shadows warned Beaujeu to look at his watch (of which he was not a little proud, for it had been presented by a class of pupils, and was the first he had ever possessed); it was three o'clock; and he dreaded the least approach of dampness for Sylvie. But when he told her that the hour for their return had arrived, she grew quite rebellious in her reluctance to depart; and Beaujeu was obliged to assume his old tone of authority, though his attempt at sternness was a most transparent counterfeit.

That happy day closed without alloy, and was written in shining characters in the chronicles of four lives.

The next afternoon, when Beaujeu came, as usual, to charm away an hour by his music, he said to Sylvie:

"I gave Mademoiselle de St. Amar a lesson to-day. She was enchanted to hear that you had actually driven out. She insists upon sending her carriage to-morrow, that you may enjoy another drive. Do you intend to refuse her polite offer, or will you go?"

"May I?" wrote Sylvie.

"I see no impropriety in your accepting; and I will invite that good Ursule to accompany you. What is the matter now? Why is that great shadow darkening over your face? About what are you thinking?"

"I was thinking how far beneath Mademoiselle de St. Amar I am!" wrote Sylvie.

"Nonsense! God's gift of genius places you upon an equality with any of God's creatures!"

"But if he revoke that gift, by taking from me the power to prove my claims to what you call genius,—what then?"

Beaujeu was more embarrassed by that straightforward question than he cared to betray. Assisted by a few pinches of snuff, he answered, evasively: "I don't like *ifs*—they always herald some *disagreeable*, but often *unlikely*, possibility.

But we have no time for idle speculations if you want to hear 'The Carnival of Venice' to-day, for I have another lesson to give shortly."

When did not Sylvie want to hear the old violin?

Beaujeu was in unusually high spirits when he came the next day to accompany Sylvie and Ursule on their drive.

The carriage of the Marquis de St. Amar arrived at the appointed hour, and gladdened the eyes of Dame Manot.

Beaujeu behaved in a most inexplicably hilarious manner. He rubbed his hands, chuckled and laughed to himself, tossed up his hat, then checked his mirthful demonstrations with comical self-rebuke, and, plunging into his snuffbox, extravagantly powdered his new suit with its dingy contents.

When Ursule suggested that they should drive to the *Bois de Boulogne*, he replied: "We shall see! we shall see!" and hummed a gay tune, alternately looking out of the window and into the carriage to watch Sylvie's face.

"Why, we are in the *Faubourg St. Germain*," exclaimed Ursule; "and here we are stopping!"

"Are we, indeed!" responded Beaujeu, jocosely.

"How stupid of that pompous, thick-skulled coachman, is it not? I suppose he does not know what he is about!"

A massive gate was thrown open, and they drove into a spacious *court*, and stopped before the entrance of a superb mansion.

"What does it mean?" asked Ursule, in great trepidation.

Sylvie's face echoed the question.

"We shall see! we shall see!" replied Beaujeu, still vehemently rubbing his hands.

"But where are we? Whom are we going to see?" inquired Ursule, now wrought up to a high pitch of nervous agitation.

"One of my pupils," answered the musician, proudly. "Come, let me hand you out. Give me your hand first, Ma'm'selle Ursule."

Very unwillingly, and with a frightened air, the spinster obeyed. As the door of the magnificent residence was thrown open by a liveried servant, she drew back, and almost clung to Sylvie, who was mounting the steps.

They had hardly crossed the threshold when light feet were heard in the distance, and a fairy-like form glided rapidly towards them, and Sylvie was clasped in the arms of Honorine!

While she embraced her humble friend, Mademoiselle de St. Amar turned her head towards Beaujeu, exclaiming: "You would not promise to come, and yet I looked for you. I was watching at the window. Ah! Mademoiselle Sylvie, how we have missed your beautiful voice! How we have mourned over your illness!"

Sylvie, for the first time for a long period, made an effort to speak—one moment she had forgotten her lost faculty. The gasping, guttural sound died away in a faint groan. She was more keenly conscious than ever before of her privation; and intense pain mingled with the joy of again beholding Mademoiselle de St. Amar. That mute, woful gaze turned on Honorine was more pathetic than words or tears.

Maitre Beaujeu, unnoticed by Sylvie, had possessed himself of the little porcelain slate, which he now placed in her hands.

The shrinking Ursule was then presented to their youthful hostess, whose courteous greeting partially restored the equanimity of her confused visitor. The latter was ejaculating to herself, How fortunate that I chose Sylvie that black silk dress and velvet bonnet, and that I put on my best of everything!"

Honorine, without loosening her clasp of Sylvie's hand, led the way to her own *boudoir*.

Ursule paused in wonder as her feet sank into the depths of the soft carpet, among mimic flowers as vivid and life-like as though they had been freshly strewn to cover the floor. Then her eyes wandered, in amazed admiration, over the masterly pictures, chaste statues, costly mirrors, rich draperies, and other exquisitely tasteful adornments of the apartment.

But Sylvie, seated beside Honorine, her small hand prisoned in one as tiny, looked only into the bright face before her, unconsciously tracing in the clear, amber eyes and ample brow a resemblance that quickened her pulses and sent the ruby current in a pleasant glow through her violet veins.

Three years before the date of our narrative, the parents of the Marquis de St. Amar and of his only sister were numbered among the victims of the cholera, then raging in Paris. Mademoiselle de St. Amar was eighteen at that period, though her infantile form and child-like manners caused her to appear much younger. Her brother was ten years her senior. A widowed and childless aunt, whose fortune had been dissipated by a profligate husband, was invited by the Marquis to preside over his household, and become the *chaperone* or social guardian of his sister.

Madame de la Tour accepted this pleasant post with gratification, though hardly with gratitude, for her narrow nature had scant room for the play of that noble emotion. Conventionality was her creed—the laws of good society her decalogue—indolence her heaven. Unruffled quietude, free from responsibility, and an existence smoothly gliding through the worn channels approved by the world, were to her the acme of felicity. This repugnance to exertion enabled her spirited young niece, the spoiled darling of the household—

> "A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,"

to gain an ascendency over her, and enjoy larger liberty than is accorded to young French maidens of her rank.

Madame de la Tour was subject to *migraine*, and various imaginary ailments, the mantle of an invalid being a graceful cloak for her constitutional inertness. Honorine was consequently left to follow the bent of her own girlish impulses. She had no idea of imprisoning herself whenever her legitimate *chaperone* kept within doors, and tormented her brother into becoming her escort, though among the Parisian *élite* a brother is not exactly regarded as a fitting protector for a high-born maiden.

It was on one of these occasions that she first beheld, heard, rapturously admired, and formed the acquaintance of the successful debutante.

In vain Madame de la Tour chided her niece for an unaristocratic amount of enthusiasm ; the peace-loving elder lady had not strength of character to contend against the good-humored wilfulness and pretty petulancies of the younger ; and, little by little, Honorine gained complete mastery, and established a right to the choice of her friends.

But this apathetic guardian, whose thoughts and time were somewhat unequally divided between her supposed ailments, her toilette, her lapdogs, and her niece (the last receiving the smallest share), when a favorite end was to be obtained, roused herself sufficiently to exhibit a decided talent for *plotting*. By the aid of this feminine accomplishment, she did not scruple to work out any desirable consummation. *Manœuvring* was her sole weapon of power, her sceptre over her rebellious subject and relative. She never tried to *compel* the wayward girl to any course, but she often laid snares to *entrap* her into paths she had no inclination to tread.

We return to the occupants of the boudoir.

Honorine was telling Sylvie how often and how anxiously she had inquired after her, and how kindly Monsieur Beaujeu had supplied her with bulletins.

"How I longed to see you while you were ill!" cried Honorine; "but there was no managing it, or you would certainly have found me at your side. That tiresome aunt of mine, Madame de la Tour, refused to accompany me on what she called one of my romantic expeditions, though I tried to startle her into acquiescence by threatening to go alone, as I could not introduce my brother into your sick-room. It was so vexatious!"

Sylvie wrote her answers on the little slate. They were somewhat brief and constrained, until her master was mentioned, and Honorine described his triumphs in public, his rapidly growing fame, and his popularity among his pupils; then Sylvie's face grew radiant, and no pencil was needed to express her thankfulness and delight.

At that moment a firm and manly tread was heard traversing the corridor. The sound went throbbing through Sylvie, as though all her faculties were merged into the one sense of hearing.

Honorine, bending her slender throat to glance over her shoulder at the door, exclaimed, "Stanislaus, are you there?"

The Marquis de St. Amar advanced towards Sylvie and his sister, and, after greeting the former cordially (though not with sufficient warmth to embarrass her), saluted Ursule and Maitre Beaujeu, and entered into conversation with the latter.

Ursule was absorbed in contemplation of the full-length picture of a lovely lady in court attire. She had not ventured to address Mademoiselle de St. Amar, but now inquired timidly: "Is it a portrait?"

"The portrait of my mother," replied Honorine, rising and joining her.

She suddenly remembered that she had wholly neglected Sylvie's humble *chaperone*, and endeavored to atone for her forgetfulness by pointing out and explaining the various subjects that adorned the walls.

Beaujeu also became a listener, and the Marquis approached Sylvie, who remained seated.

After one or two observations, to which she replied upon her slate, he unreflectingly, or, perhaps, because it did not seem polite to use an advantage which she did not possess, continued the interchange of remarks by writing.

The silence attracted his sister's attention, and, looking around, she saw her brother's pencil rapidly moving over the slate.

"Why, Stanislaus, have you, too, lost your voice?" she saucily asked.

He answered laughingly, "Really, I almost fancied that I had, just as a deaf man shouts to his neighbor, thinking that he also cannot hear."

"Come and listen to the voices of my birds, and make Mademoiselle Sylvie acknowledge how many of her notes were stolen from them," said Honorine, throwing open the glass doors of a spacious conservatory, which more nearly resembled a garden.

The rarest floral products of all seasons had united in simultaneous bloom, and were planted in beds, intersected by winding walks. In the centre a fountain sent up, out of the mouths of glittering dolphins, jets of water that fell in a diamond shower over the figure of a shell-crowned Undine. Birds, whose green cages were concealed in the branches of oriental trees, warbled among the boughs, ignoring their captivity. At the further end, vines of the passion-flower, jasmine, and clambering roses mingling together, formed an arbor, the framework of which was invisible through its drapery of foliage and flowers. Several rustic chairs stood within the bower.

"This is my study," said Honorine; "and here is my stool of instruction and repentance," she added, singling out a Lilliputian chair formed of twisted grape-vines.

She motioned to Sylvie to be seated, but the enraptured girl shook her head, and stretched forth her hands towards the brilliant parterre, charmed onward by an irresistible impulse.

Honorine permitted her guest to wander about at will, while she herself flitted, with humming-bird motion, from plant to plant, rifling the choicest of their blossoms to make a bouquet.

Before it was presented to her young friend, the Marquis had gathered one sprig of heliotrope, and offered it to Sylvie, bending upon her an earnest gaze that seemed to penetrate into her very heart.

Did he mean to discover by her manner whether she remembered that he had once before placed a branch of these sweet-scented flowers in her hand? If he did, the down-dropping of her eyelids, and the sudden crimson that flushed into her cheeks, and covered her very brow with its virginal veil, must have eloquently answered his inquiry.

Honorine held out the magnificent bouquet she had culled. Without lifting her eyes, Sylvie placed the heliotrope in her bosom, and took the flowers of her hostess.

Noon sounded, and Maitre Beaujeu, whose time had now become very valuable, declared that he had not another moment at his command, and they must take their leave.

"You will surely come again? Come soon, and come often," said Mademoiselle de St. Amar to Sylvie. "It will do you so much good to be imprisoned here among my birds, who will lend you the music of their voices until you regain the surpassing melody of your own. Will you not insist upon her coming frequently? and will you not accompany her, Mademoiselle Valette?" she added, addressing Ursule.

Ursule expressed her thanks for the courteous invitation by a low reverence, without trusting her tongue.

"It would make me glad to come," wrote Sylvie.

"And I have a passion for making people glad; that is an additional reason why you should return soon," replied Honorine.

The Marquis handed the ladies into the carriage, but Sylvie's averted eyes were not once again raised to his. The tell-tale blush which had treacherously revealed her inmost thoughts, deepened on her cheek beneath the gaze which she felt but could not see; an indefinable sense of shame weighed down her lids.

Once more in her secluded little chamber, she sat down and pored over the porcelain slate, reading and re-reading characters in her own and another handwriting.

"I fear it may never be restored," she had written in answer to the very natural hope expressed by the Marquis that she would shortly regain her voice.

Then followed these words in his hand: "If it should not be—if it were gone *for ever*, it would still exist for me. I have never ceased to hear those marvellous tones. Has not your privation been very difficult to endure?"

The reply "very difficult," was written beneath.

Then followed, in his characters: "To those who truly value you, you must only be endeared by such a trial."

At that moment Honorine had interrupted the correspondence.

Could Sylvie efface those precious lines? No—oh, no! They were too full of consolation—they inspired her with too much hope—they filled her soul with suggestions too delightfully soothing.

"Ah surely," she said, internally, "the sorest sorrow must be endurable in an atmosphere of love. I can bear mine if it endears me to others."

So argues every deeply affectionate nature—*until* the sorrow is sent.

The fresh spray of heliotrope, before its amethyst hue had begun to pale, was placed beside the withered sprig. In the narrow compass between the two, what happy memories were bounded.

Did Sylvie, then, presume to love the Marquis de St. Amar? She would have been startled, almost shocked, if any human being—if even that inward monitor who abruptly propounds the most searching questions—had made that inquiry.

We must plead guilty to the weakness of believing that love often leaps into existence unawares, and with a first impression—at first sight—darting across the awakening soul as the first streak of light flashes over the grey sky of morning, and gives assurance of a sun behind, which, by and by, will flood the heavens with its meridian splendor. Often that first sun-ray of love illumines the horizon of maidenhood when as little is known (save by intuition) of the character, mind, and person of him whose hand kindled the prophetic flash, as Sylvie knew of the Marquis de St. Amar. The one face haunts—the voice echoes in the ears, palpitating through the spirit—an electric thrill shoots athwart the frame at the lightest touch of that chosen one's hand—his presence brightens all creation, and wings the heaviest hours; the pulses are attuned in harmony to the beating of his ; an *internal recognition* makes the briefest acquaintance seem of long existence, and the most incomprehensible and contradictory traits reasonable and natural. All this is very unphilosophical —very *absurd*—very !—*except* to those who have themselves experienced the sensation.

During the next six weeks Honorine constantly sent her carriage for Sylvie and Ursule, and many were the pleasant mornings they passed together.

Madame de la Tour could not be said to smile upon this singular intimacy, but she found Sylvie so gentle, ladylike, and unobtrusive, and Honorine so determined in her infatuation; that she did not *yet* see sufficient cause to take the trouble of laying any of her pleasant little plots to break up their intercourse.

The Marquis was usually present, though now and then Sylvie came without his being apprised. He had introduced her to his library, and often selected choice volumes for her perusal. He was in the habit of reading aloud to his sister, and her two lowly visitors also became his auditors. Sylvie's mind was thus becoming cultivated, and her developing taste for literature strengthened every day! What a new world of thought and information was opened to her! How she longed to enjoy the full advantages of regular study! Her aptness and quickness were amazing; and Honorine, in spite of her superior acquirements, often felt that Sylvie was better able than herself to comprehend the authors with whom they were brought into communion by their self-constituted teacher of *belles-lettres.*

Sylvie's health was not merely restored, but it was more firmly established than it had ever been before. Her fragile form was gradually rounding, and the pallor and sallowness of her complexion had given place to a clear, creamy hue, tinged with the faintest rose; her bearing and manners became more and more polished by contact with the refined beings among whom she moved. To what good could all these captivating changes tend?

She no longer carried the little porcelain slate, from which certain characters had never been effaced. Honorine had presented her with ivory tablets, held in a cover of blue enamel, upon which the one word, "Sylvie" was traced in pearls; a slender gold pencil was suspended from the finely-wrought Venetian chain to which the tablets were attached. Sylvie now always wore the chain about her neck, and the tablets in her girdle. Pencil and tablets were in frequent requisition, for her voice—alas!—that remained silent!

CHAPTER XII.

RENUNCIATION.

The slumbrous eyes of Madame de la Tour did not long remain closed to what was passing around her.

One of her beloved lapdogs chanced to be ailing. Her niece casually mentioned that Ursule professed to be acquainted with a mode of treatment which would be very beneficial to the suffering favorite. The next time Madame de la Tour heard that Honorine was receiving her humble guests, anxiety for the health of the over-fed pet caused her to seek Ursule in Honorine's boudoir.

The apartment was empty; but through the open doors of the conservatory she beheld Sylvie walking with the Marquis de St. Amar. Honorine, at some distance, assisted by Ursule, appeared to be securing the cage of a mocking-bird to the bough from which it had accidentally been loosened.

Madame de la Tour became a looker-on unnoticed. She was struck with the deportment of her nephew towards Sylvie. She marked with what lover-like emphasis he seemed to be talking to her; how tenderly he bent over, until his breath must have fanned her cheek; with what an impassioned gaze his eyes were riveted upon her animated countenance; and with what responsive earnestness Sylvie replied to him; sometimes by rapid and significant gestures, sometimes by tracing a few lines upon her ivory tablets. Could it be possible that the nobleman had so far forgotten himself as to be captivated by this plebeian maiden? To what disgraceful consequences might not such an attachment lead? This ill weed must be nipped in the bud before it could expand into baleful blossoms. A mode of effecting this blighting process, which was only too simple, suggested itself to the wily schemer. She would have preferred some more difficult and tortuous path, by which her talents for manœuvring might have been called into pleasant play.

Without having been seen, she noiselessly retired; and, on reaching her own apartment, rang for a servant, and ordered him to seek Ma'm'selle Valettè in the conservatory, and say that his mistress desired a few moments' conversation with her.

Ursule, though not a little taken aback by this unprecedented summons, had no alternative but to obey. When she was ushered into the presence of Madame de la Tour, the latter received her with languid *hauteur*. In her composition there was a large dash of pride and pomposity, which was glossed over by her habitual apathy, until she was roused to action.

Motioning Ursule to be seated, she addressed her curtly.

"Ma'm'selle Valette, I expect the object of this interview to be kept secret—especially from my niece. Have I your word that it shall be?"

Ursule timidly replied in the affirmative.

Madame de la Tour went on as abruptly as before:

"It has always been a difficult task to guide and control Mademoiselle de St. Amar. Inappropriate as was her association with a young person of Ma'm'selle Sylvie's condition in life, I allowed my niece to receive her without anticipating any unpleasant results. I have reason to believe that this unfortunate girl has been so much flattered and elated by a few unmeaning attentions bestowed upon her, chiefly through pity, by the Marquis de St. Amar, that it is necessary, for her own good, to withdraw her from further exposure to the danger of misinterpreting my nephew's courtesy."

Little cared Madame de la Tour for Sylvie's well-being, but she took her stand upon this amiable ground, because it was beneath her dignity even to hint that her nephew could have been inspired with an undue interest in the lowly maiden.

Ursule was struck dumb. It had never occurred to her that Sylvie could regard one so much above her in any light that was incompatible with his rank and her humility. Now a thousand trivial incidents, which had made but little impression at the moment, rushed back into her mind, and forced the instantaneous conviction that Madame de la Tour had not arrived at an erroneous conclusion.

That lady proceeded a little more graciously, for she was flattered by the evident effect produced by her harangue.

"To a person of your apparent good sense, it is hardly needful for me to suggest the course which propriety demands. Your mode of action I do not dictate; I shall only look to the result, which must be a cessation of this too familiar and unmeet intercourse. Am I perfectly comprehended?"

"Perfectly, Madame;" Ursule forced herself to reply.

"Should Mademoiselle de St. Amar inquire why I sent for you, you are to understand that the object of this interview is solely to consult you about my poor little dog, who is suffering terribly. I am distressed to death about him! My niece informed me that you expressed an opinion the other day concerning the proper treatment of the dear little martyr; oblige me with your advice on the subject."

Madame de la Tour took her asthmatic favorite in her arms with as tender a touch as though it were a sick infant. Ursule endeavored to collect her thoughts, and communicated a prescription which had proved very salutary to canine health. Madame de la Tour was quite melted by the anticipated restoration of her curly darling. The *less* important subject, previously disposed of, appeared to have faded from her thoughts. Ursule, after giving all the medical information in her power, gladly withdrew.

With slow steps she returned to Honorine's boudoir. The most sorrowful episode of her own life was rising up before her and saddening her anew. In her youth she had given her affections to one who had been forced by family considerations to offer his hand elsewhere. The very remembrance of that cruel wrenching away of the heart which she had endured was filled with intense anguish, and she shrank from beholding Sylvie undergoing a similar soul-convulsion.

"What did my aunt want?" inquired Honorine, the instant Ursule re-entered.

Sylvie and the Marquis were still wandering among the flowers; they had not noticed Ursule's brief absence.

"She desired to learn what opinion I had expressed to you concerning the treatment of her lapdog," was the evasive answer.

"Oh, those blessed lapdogs!" replied the unsuspecting Honorine. "If you preserve the life of one of them, Madame de la Tour will think that you deserve a pension as a public benefactor."

When Ursule and Sylvie returned home that day, the former said, with unusual gravity, as they reached her door: "Come in, Sylvie; I want to talk to you about—about—about something of importance."

Sylvie complied with a face so bright, so full of hope, so free from care, that Ursule felt like a pitying executioner who does not dare to withhold the blow ordered by a superior power.

She laid aside her out-of-door wrappings and sat down. Sylvie threw off her black velvet bonnet, brought a little bench to Ursule's feet, and seated herself, leaning with both arms upon her friend's lap.

Ursule found it very difficult to commence a task from which there was no escape. Sylvie was too much engrossed by her own sweet thoughts to notice her troubled look.

At last Ursule said: "Sylvie, you are quite well now, are you not?"

Sylvie nodded a glad assent.

"We must wait patiently for the restoration of your voice."

Sylvie assented again. She *was* waiting patiently—hopefully—happily.

"You enjoy your visits to Mademoiselle Honorine very much, do you not?"

Sylvie's expressive look replied that no words could depict how much.

"The *Marquis* talks to you—reads to you—walks with you in that lovely conservatory—and all *that* is very delightful," resumed Ursule.

Sylvie drew a long breath, and her face was suffused with a blush of unmistakable affirmation.

"Sylvie—my darling—forgive me! It grieves me to the heart to pain you—to *force* you to reflect—but—to what *good* can this lead? What result can you expect?"

At those soul-searching questions the hot blood fled from Sylvie's cheeks and lips, as though it rushed in a lava-torrent to protect her heart from some freezing clutch. With the bound of a fawn suddenly roused from serene slumbers by a death-arrow, she sprang to her feet.

The all-engrossing present had been so enchanting, that she had never once fixed her eyes upon the future.

Trembling from head to foot, she stood one moment wildly gazing at Ursule, whose hand had unerringly loosened the shaft by which she was transfixed, then dropped down again into her place, and buried her white visage in her compassionate torturer's lap.

How much more rapid than light, even, is thought, which it resembles! Pages would be needed to chronicle the lightning-like reflections which, during the brief silence that ensued, flashed through Sylvie's mind, and illumined recesses of her own heart into which she had never before gazed.

Finding that she did not look up, Ursule proceeded: "Brave spirits such as yours should have courage to examine the consequences of their own actions. Do not think that I judge you harshly because I have blown away, with rude breath, the illusive mists floating before your eyes. The Marquis de St. Amar is the first gentleman with whom you have ever been acquainted. Independent of the superiority of his intellect and person over those of most men, it is but natural that you should feel attracted towards him—that you should be grateful for his attention—that you should enjoy his society—that—that—alas! Yes, it is but too natural that you should give him your heart!"

Sylvie's head sank deeper in the folds of Ursule's dress. There was another, longer pause.

"That you *do*, or *will* love him if you continue to be subjected to the spell of his presence, there is little room to doubt," added Ursule, unshrinkingly. She had applied the knife to the disease, and must cut deep to reach its core. "Perhaps he does, or *may* love you, though that is far less certain; but what good could spring from his love or yours?"

Sylvie's head swayed from side to side with a despairing motion, which answered, "None! none! none!"

"Your stations in life are widely removed—there is such an almost impassable gulf between you, that he can never contemplate making you his wife."

At these words Sylvie grew as still as though pulse and breath had ceased.

"Then, to entertain a passion for you would simply be an *insult*, would it not?"

Still no movement.

"Sylvie, all I have to add is concentrated in one question. Before that parting which must come, grows harder for you, perhaps for *him*—for he is a man of genuine and honorable feeling, should you not save yourself, *and him*, future misery by putting an end to this ill-assorted intercourse?"

Sylvie no longer trembled; her frame was almost rigid in its calmness. Slowly she raised her ashy face, and looking with steady, unmoistened eyes into Ursule's, bowed assent. Her countenance appeared to have grown suddenly older; lines of sorrow and self-renunciation had been ploughed into the young brow in a few brief minutes.

She took the tablets from her girdle and wrote:

"Best of friends, you are right! You have made me reflect. You have opened my eyes. I will go there no more!"

"I know what you suffer," returned Ursule, soothingly. "I have lived through anguish as poignant in years long past."

Sylvie rose with a composure which was full of the true dignity of self-respect, embraced Ursule gratefully, lifted the velvet bonnet from the bed, and passed with firm steps from the room.

When she opened the door of her mother's apartment, she saw Madame de la Roche bending over her work, and heard her moaning to herself as she plied her needle.

"So you have come at last!" she murmured, fretfully. "I have been expecting you for an hour. You stay later and later every time you go. But nobody seems to care how lonely *I* am!"

"I will keep you company after to-day. I will help you work to-morrow," wrote Sylvie, and handed the tablets to her mother.

"What is the matter, then? What has happened? How oddly you look! There is not a drop of blood in your face! Have your grand friends become tired of you? Ah, I thought they would! That's the way with them all; and it's only what I foresaw."

Sylvie wrote in answer:

"They are as kind as ever; but my holiday as an invalid has been long enough. I am quite well now, and to-morrow I will go back to my sewing until my voice comes back to me."

"And that will *never* be! Never! never! never!" was the consolatory response.

"Then I must sew on to the end," Sylvie quietly wrote in reply.

She left the tablets in her mother's hand, and went into her own little chamber.

The strong-hearted maiden did not waver in her resolution. The next day she sewed diligently by her mother's side, in spite of the constant complaining of the latter, who was no better satisfied than before.

When Maitre Beaujeu found his pupil thus employed, he accosted her with:

"What are you doing there, doubling up your chest in that fashion? What have you to do with needle and thread?"

She was prepared for this ebullition, and, with an air of assumed cheerfulness, wrote, "I have to earn my livelihood if I can do so, my master.

I have been idle too long. Now it is time for my holiday to end."

"It is time for your folly to end," replied the irritated musician. "Who put this nonsense into your head?"

"Do not be angry with me," wrote Sylvie; "but until my voice returns, I must use my needle; if it should never return, I shall have nothing but my needle to depend upon."

Maitre Beaujeu was ready to burst out into such a rage as Sylvie had not beheld since her misfortune, but her distressed and pleading look checked him, and he only answered, "We will talk to Mademoiselle Honorine about this to-morrow."

"I have written to tell Mademoiselle de St. Amar my determination," wrote Sylvie. "I thanked her for all her kindness, and bade her adieu; our paths, henceforth, lie apart."

"Where is the note?" inquired Beaujeu, authoritatively.

"It has gone—I sent it by post," wrote Sylvie.

"Miserable girl!" groaned her master; "you want to ruin yourself! You will make Mademoiselle Honorine think of you merely as a poor sewing girl, instead of the brilliant woman of genius whom she might be proud to take by the hand, and her brother too——"

Sylvie quailed at these last words. Beaujeu saw how she shrank, and paused; a new light dawned upon him.

"What has occurred between you and the Marquis?" he asked, abruptly.

"Nothing," wrote Sylvie.

"You have had no misunderstanding? He has not offended you? He has not said or done anything to grieve you?"

She pointed to the "Nothing" before traced on her tablets as still her answer.

"When did you come to your present novel resolution?"

"Yesterday," she wrote.

"And you mean to keep it?"

"My dear master, I do."

After Beaujeu had read these words, she closed the tablets and replaced them in her girdle with an air which announced there was nothing more to be said.

Sylvie's inflexibility of purpose and determined composure baffled Beaujeu. He could not discover any solution of her enigmatical conduct.

While he was pondering, she went to the table, took up his violin, and placed it upon his knees. The action was a petition.

Beaujeu, somewhat softened, said, as he tuned his instrument, "When I have reflected, we will talk further about the unreasonable course you have chosen to pursue."

Reflection, however, supplied him with no argument that shook Sylvie's constancy. She steadfastly pursued the path she had marked out for herself without one sign of faltering. At times her countenance betrayed that she was passing through a great struggle, and gaining a great victory, but the combat that tested, increased rather than exhausted her mental strength.

Honorine wrote, entreating that she would give some fuller and more comprehensible explanation of her conduct, and begging that she would continue her visits. Sylvie replied that it was best their intercourse should end—*better, at least, for herself*, she added.

In vain Beaujeu fumed, and scolded, and argued; Sylvie was immovable.

Strange to say, her melancholy mother gradually grew less despondent. She had said Sylvie's intimacy with those so far above her would come to a sudden termination—and it *had* done so; her spirits were always brightened by the verification of her evil predictions.

Sylvie's father had not recovered from the depression incident upon his last disappointment, and was seldom at home. He had returned to the notary, once more solicited employment, and gone to work with unwonted industry.

Sylvie's days now appeared to move in a fixed and monotonous circle, but their dull round was less oppressive than might have been imagined. In renouncing *self*, she had gained a serenity which is allied to cheerfulness. Consoling thoughts were infused into her mind through many a heavenly influx, and spoke from lips that even casually addressed her, and found a voice in the very pages of the books she opened.

A few lines from one volume in particular, haunted yet helped her. They were those words of Thomas à Kempis: "If thou seekest this or that, and would be here or there to enjoy *thine own will and pleasure*, thou shalt *never* be quiet or free from care, and in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee." Every day she became more and more convinced of the truth of those words of wisdom. She must set aside *self*—must renounce "her own will and pleasure" to find peace. She must wake from rosy dreams to soften stony realities with the mossy covering of patience. She must leave the flowery paths of self-gratification, and tread with bleeding feet the flinty ways of duty, confident that by that road alone she could reach the goal of happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MUTE SINGER.

THE dead calms of life are seldom of long duration, and the winds and waves of circumstance soon ruffled the smooth, blank sea of Sylvie's existence.

One morning, about a week after the events related in the foregoing chapter, she was sitting alone at her work. Her mother had gone out to breathe the fresh air and make a few needful purchases. All at once the tramping of heavy feet upon the stair, and the confused murmur of excited voices, caused Sylvie to pause and listen. A hurried tapping sounded on the door. Sylvie opened it, and found good Dame Manot standing without.

"Oh, my poor child! my poor child!" she sobbed forth, in violent agitation.

The young girl, alarmed at this tearful greeting, tremblingly turned her eyes in the direction of the heavy tread, which now came nearer. She saw two men carrying a litter, followed by a miscellaneous crowd. A male form was partially visible upon the rude couch. She sprang towards it, and beheld—her father! lying senseless—it might be dead! The blood poured from a deep gash in his forehead, and stained with crimson his ghastly face, his fair hair, and disordered garments.

The daughter's rapid glance of horror was followed by a shriek that rang through the long corridor—rang? yes, *rang* in one loud, clear note of music!

"My father! oh, my father! bring him in!" uttered in the same key, burst upon the startled ears of all present. She had spoken—spoken in song! She had involuntarily, unconsciously, *sung* the words that rushed to her lips.*

Every one stood petrified.

"Oh, bring him in!" she sang again.

The bearers had set down their piteous load. Wonder-struck, they lifted it and obeyed.

When Monsieur de la Roche was laid upon his own bed, his daughter dropped upon her knees at his side, and with steady hand pressing together the gaping, gushing wound, turned to Dame Manot, singing: "Dr. Souvestre—go! bring him quickly!"

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* This singular incident, which taxes the credulity of the reader, is not an imaginary occurrence. A similar circumstance was related to the writer by one whose veracity could not be doubted, and who was narrating her own experience.

The concierge was stunned, confounded.

"It is wonderful! wonderful!" she ejaculated, without attempting to stir.

The strangers, who had poured into the room, thought this young girl, who sang while a parent lay dying or dead before her, must surely be deprived of reason.

Sylvie was too deeply absorbed in the contemplation of her father to comprehend the cause of their stupefying amazement. Finding that the *concierge* did not move, she turned to her again, and sang imploringly: "Go! go! go!"

That instant Mathieu, who chanced to be passing the door, made his way through the crowd.

Sylvie caught sight of him, and sang in a voice of thrilling pathos: "Good Mathieu, go for Dr. Souvestre! Oh, bring him quickly!"

"She has regained her voice! Thank God! thank God!" cried the boy.

Without heeding his words, she motioned to him impatiently, still singing, "Go! go! do you not see he bleeds to death?"

Mathieu darted away, shouting, as he flew down the stairs, "She has regained her voice! Mademoiselle Sylvie has regained her voice!"

He ran against, and nearly overturned, some one who was ascending. It was Maitrė Beaujeu, who seized him savagely by the shoulders.

"Do you want to knock me down, you crazy cripple? Why are you yelling in that frantic fashion?"

"She has regained her voice! regained her voice!" shrieked Mathieu, breaking away from him, and hurrying on.

The boy gave a sharp rap on Ursule's door, and without waiting for her to appear, flung it open and screamed out, "She has regained her voice! her voice!" then rushed down the next flight.

At the entrance of the house he encountered Madame de la Roche creeping dolefully along with a basket upon her arm.

"She has regained her voice! regained her voice!" bellowed Mathieu, joyfully, in her ears; and then, with a leap that almost ended in a somerset, he bounded into the street, and fled.

Madame de la Roche could hardly credit her ears.

"Regained her voice! That was surely what he said. Whose voice could it be but Sylvie's?"

Excitement imparted strength to limbs that had failed her a moment before, and she rapidly mounted the stairs and entered her own room only a few moments after Beaujeu and Ursule.

What a sight met her eyes! Her husband stretched upon the bed, white as a corpse, and covered with blood;—Sylvie, her hands and arms all crimsoned, kneeling beside him, trying to stem that red current, by holding together the deeply-parted flesh from which it spouted, if her fingers, for an instant, relaxed their pressure.

Madame de la Roche staggered towards the couch.

The moment Sylvie beheld her she sang:

"Mother! he lives! he has but fainted! If we can only staunch this blood, all will be well!"

"Sylvie! Sylvie!" was all her mother could gasp forth.

"Are you his wife?" asked one of the men who had carried the litter.

"Yes, yes; how did this happen?"

"He was thrown from a horse. I was passing when the spirited creature flung him over her head. I recognised the animal—a splendid grey mare which a friend of mine has for sale. It was through my friend, the owner, that we discovered who this gentleman was, and were enabled to carry him home. It's a sad accident, for that's an ugly cut; and I fear your troubles don't end here; I am afraid the shock of seeing her father in this terrible condition has unsettled your daughter's mind," added the man, looking pityingly at Sylvie.

Before Madame de la Roche could reply, Mathieu re-entered with Dr. Souvestre, whom he had fortunately encountered a few paces from the door.

When Sylvie saw the physician, she sang:

"Can you not staunch this blood? Oh, lose no time, or he will die!"

"It is true, then! She has regained her voice! *most marvellous!*" ejaculated the doctor, gazing at her in astonishment, without regarding her father.

"For Heaven's sake, lose no time or he will die!" sang Sylvie.

Her beseeching intonation recalled the doctor to himself, and he proceeded to examine, cleanse, and sew up the wound.

During the process, he asked Sylvie several necessary questions, to which she replied as before in song.

Maitre Beaujeu had sunk into a chair, completely overpowered by rapturous emotion. His hands were tightly clasped, his eyes upraised with an expression of beatitude, and tears ran in rapid showers down his withered cheeks.

Ursule laughed and cried by turns, yet had sufficient presence of mind to assist Sylvie, who was diligently aiding the doctor, now lifting up the matted locks which he unsparingly severed from her father's temples, now holding the water and sponge, now sewing bandages and handing pins.

Mathieu capered about the room, crying in the ears of every one who came in his way:

"She has regained her voice! she has regained her voice! Do you not hear? Do you not hear?"

The blood was staunched—the wound sewed—the head bound up. Monsieur de la Roche opened his eyes, but seeing his daughter bending over him, feebly murmured:

"Sylvie!"

"My father!" she sang in reply.

"Good Heavens! Is that you, Sylvie? Or am I dreaming? What is this? Who are these people?" he asked, with a confused look. "My daughter, is it really you?"

"Yes, father, it is I!" again she answered, singing.

"And your voice is restored? Gracious Heaven! Is it possible?"

Sylvie, with a convulsive start which told that she had not until that moment been aware of the joyful fact, replied with a trill of such power, sweetness, and flexibility, that Beaujeu leaped from his seat, vehemently clapping his hands, and shouting, "Bravo! bravo! bravo!" in uncontrollable ecstasy.

Monsieur de la Roche had lifted himself upon his elbow, and cried out with his old enthusiasm, "Why, what a set of miserable croakers you have all been! Even *you*, doctor! You see—she can speak! she can sing! she has regained that glorious voice which you all told me was gone for ever! Now all will be right again! What a pity that grey mare was too spirited for my purpose! There was no managing the mettlesome creature. She was a beauty and a bargain! Thinking I might by and by contrive to purchase her, I gave her a trial, and she threw me. But it won't matter; I'm not much worse for the trouble, and she has her equals in the market." As he was running on thus hopefully, his eyes rested upon the musician. "Ah, Beaujeu, my dear fellow, are you there? Let Monsieur Le Grand know at once that Sylvie will sing for him *to-morrow—to-night*—when he wishes! Will you not, child?"

Sylvie, now quite composed, tried to syllable "Yes," but alas! the sound died away in a hoarse whisper!

With a look of blank consternation, she added, almost inaudibly, "My voice! my voice has gone again!"

Then, how they all gathered around her, with the sudden, sickening revulsion of feeling that follows hope changed to despair!

"Can you not speak? Try—try again!" said Beaujeu, tenderly taking the hand, still red with the gory stain.

She shook her head mournfully.

Grief and disappointment sealed every lip.

At last the silence was broken by Dr. Souvestre, who exclaimed, as though a thought had just struck him: "You did not *speak* before—you were *singing*, not *speaking*, when I entered. Try to sing again!"

Sylvie broke forth with that beautiful anthem from Handel's "Messiah"—"But thou didst not leave his soul;" and while her entranced auditors listened in dumb wonder, she sang the whole air with the most faultless vocalization.

"This is very extraordinary! The first case of the kind that ever came under my notice!" said the young practitioner, who always talked as if he had the experience of half a century or more. "It is obvious that only the vocal chords used in *speaking* are injured; those called into action when she *sings* are unimpaired."

"Her great gift remains! She will be able to resume her profession!" exclaimed Beaujeu, in a tone of mingled affirmation and interrogation.

"Yes, assuredly," replied the physician.

Who could attempt to describe the holy rapture that rendered Sylvie's face luminous?

The burst of joy that greeted the doctor's words was suddenly checked. Monsieur de la Roche, exhausted by emotion and loss of blood, sank back insensible.

The doctor peremptorily ordered the apartment to be cleared of all but Sylvie, her mother, and Ursule.

Beaujeu and Mathieu seemed inclined to linger, not from any deep interest in the patient, but because they could not forego the delight of again hearing Sylvie's long-silent voice. An impatient gesture from Dr. Souvestre caused the musician to seize hold of the hunchback, with a rough friendliness which showed their bond of union was drawn closer by this mutual joy, and hurry with him out of the apartment.

Monsieur de la Roche was restored to consciousness with difficulty, and when his heavy eyes once more unclosed, and the breath came slowly through his white and parted lips, it was apparent that his mind wandered, and his pulse gave indication of fever.

Madame de la Roche was almost excusable for her piteous lamentation.

"Alas! alas! the shadow of joy never comes to us except hand-in-hand with a tangible sorrow!"

Dr. Souvestre administered an opiate, and gave strict orders that the patient should remain undisturbed. He soon sank into a heavy slumber.

Sylvie, in passing the old piano so long closed, threw it open by an irresistible impulse; but without allowing her fingers to wander over the yellow keys, she softly closed the lid again, and stole to her own chamber to give her full heart vent in that holy communing that heightened her every joy, and lessened her every sorrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT WORLD AGAIN.

MAITRE BEAUJEU lost no time in communicating the glad tidings to Mademoiselle de St. Amar. An enthusiastic letter of congratulation from Honorine greeted Sylvie a few hours later; a letter filled with expressions of wonder and delight at the sudden restoration of the young singer's voice, replete with pathetic lamentation over the late interruption of intercourse, and closing with fond anticipations that the link so mysteriously broken would now happily be cemented.

Sylvie read the balm-dropping lines with a palpitating heart. If she resumed her position before the public, would she not naturally be brought in contact with Mademoiselle de St. Amar and—her brother? Would she not again see him whom wisdom bade her banish from her sight? Would she not again hear that soul-stirring voice which set all the finest cords within her vibrating? And yet would not the icy barrier of circumstance loom up between them as high, and as wide, and as freezing as ever? Would she not need greater strength than heretofore in resisting temptation, which she could no longer fly? Would she have courage to stand in its very midst and combat its assaults?

These reflections were interrupted by the incoherent ravings of her father. The day after his accident, Monsieur de la Roche became dangerously ill. Violent mental excitement, and the injury his head had sustained, produced a fever strongly resembling that by which his daughter had been attacked.

We have already said that Dr. Souvestre was the youthful partner of a distinguished physician, who allowed his juvenile assistants to study their profession by practising among the poor. Dr. Janin, however, accompanied Dr. Souvestre when he next visited Monsieur de la Roche. But the hasty manner in which the elder physician examined the patient, and the eagerness with which he turned to Sylvie, betrayed that *she* was the magnet which had drawn him thither. The extraordinary recovery of her vocal powers in singing, while she remained unable to use her voice in speaking, had doubtless awakened his medical interest and curiosity. It became worth his while to investigate a case so remarkable. He pronounced it very rare, but *not without* parallel. Several instances of the kind were on record, but this was the first which had occurred within his own cognizance.

Sylvie responded upon her tablets to his numerous inquiries. After a while, he requested her to endeavor to speak. The attempt proved her total inability. Then he unceremoniously desired her to sing. Immediately her rich, rolling voice filled the chamber with the solemn grandeur of the *Stabat Mater*. At the first note, her father, who for some time had been tossing about, talking wildly, and making vehement efforts to rise, sank gently back; a soft smile played over his handsome features, and he lay serenely still and silent.

Sylvie noted the change, and as she ceased singing, wrote upon her tablets:

"Is singing likely to disturb my father?"

"No," replied Dr. Janin; "if we may judge from its present calming effect, it will benefit him. You have a wonderful organ, Mademoiselle—the most remarkable I ever heard. It is fortunate for yourself *and the public* that the injury to your vocal chords does not extend to that portion used in singing."

These words were accompanied by a low bow, for Sylvie's superlative talent, and the dignified simplicity of her manner, awakened an instinctive reverence.

Doctor Souvestre, who had long experienced, and struggled to conceal, a warm admiration for his quondam patient, became highly elated by his superior's complimentary recognition of her genius and attraction. It removed the dread of being charged with a youthful folly unworthy of a grave disciple of Esculapius, if the young doctor revealed his true sentiments. His usually pompous and consequential demeanor melted away; and had Sylvie been less engrossed by her father's condition, she could not have failed to remark the *dévouement* of his manner, the unusual animation with which he conversed, and the flattering deference of his tone. He completely laid aside the solemn air assumed in his capacity of medical adviser, and became the agreeable guest—the genial friend—the incipient lover. He lingered for some time after Doctor Janin took his leave, and would not then have torn himself away had not Sylvie's abstracted look and absent responses betrayed her wandering thoughts.

The door had hardly closed upon him when Sylvie opened the piano, and, with her head turned towards her father, that she might watch his countenance, her fingers once more magnetized the old keys, and her sympathetic voice gushed forth in thrilling sweetness.

The same look of placid happiness that had stolen over her father's lineaments before, now came to them again. His restless movements ceased, his moans were hushed, the widely-opened lids fell softly over his too brilliant eyes. That he recognised the well-known but long-silent tones, was doubtful; that he listened with intense pleasure was certain.

She was still singing when Maitre Beaujeu entered.

He noiselessly approached, and, almost holding his breath, took his seat beside her. She greeted him with a bow of welcome, and sang on.

At the conclusion of the strain, he said, in a voice hoarse with emotion:

"It was no dream, then?"

"No dream?" replied Sylvie's speaking eyes.

"And you will be able to sing on Saturday?" he asked.

Sylvie bowed her head, and took his shrivelled hand in hers, and lifted it to her lips.

"I saw Monsieur Le Grand last evening," said Beaujeu. "He was overjoyed at the intelligence I brought. His next concert will take place at the close of the week. Your re-appearance before the public will be made the principal feature. But we have decided that you shall be tested in only one piece; and I have selected that inspired strain by which you electrified us all yesterday. Do you like my choice?"

Sylvie's smile of assent signified that she could not have made a better.

An exclamation from her mother now called the young girl to her side. The sick man made a violent effort to leap out of bed, and the feeble arms of his wife and daughter could but ill restrain him. Beaujeu came to their aid, and, with some difficulty, succeeded in forcing the struggling sufferer back upon his pillow.

"This will not do," remarked the musician, panting from his exertions. "You need masculine help. Mathieu has strong arms, in spite of his deformity, and he is faithfulness personified; we must secure his assistance."

Neither Sylvie nor her mother objected, and Beaujeu went in search of the cripple.

Soon after, Mathieu made his appearance by the sick-bed with a visage only too beaming to be in keeping with the office he was commissioned to fill. Yet how could he look grave when a felicity he had never dared to picture in his wildest dreams had been granted him? He would hourly see the object of his adoration—he would hear, unchided, that delicious voice to which he had so often tremblingly listened by stealth,—better still, he would be allowed to serve Sylvie; and in assisting to watch over her father, he would spare her pain and fatigue. Could his happiness reach a higher climax?

Doctor Souvestre came daily, and his visits were of much longer duration than heretofore. After a few moments devoted to his patient, he invariably took his seat beside the young maiden, and playfully pointing to her tablets, started some topic of general interest which drew forth a reply. He had quickly discovered her tastes, and her keen enjoyment of literature and art always afforded agreeable subjects of conversation. Sylvie had perhaps noticed, but she had not attached any importance to, or sought to interpret the change in his deportment towards her. She treated him with careless frankness and smiling courtesy; but, far from suspecting that she was encouraging his passion, she was unconscious of its existence.

He often solicited her to sing, under the pretence of watching the effect produced by her voice upon his patient.

Formerly, when she sang, she had felt inspired by the music alone, seeing and hearing nothing that passed around her, raised above all sublunary recognition, falling into a heavenly trance through her delight "in concord of sweet sounds." *Now* her abstraction was even deeper, but *different.* She no longer appeared to herself to have *no* auditor. True, she lost sight of the elegant and refined young man, sitting in silent admiration by her side; of the pallid invalid upon the bed yonder, whose face wore an expression of such hearkening gladness; of the attenuated shape hovering near, whose wan visage caught some faint reflection from the sick man's joy-illumined countenance; of the mis-shapen form that stood at the foot of the couch, leaning eagerly forwards, with parted lips and dilated eyes; yet she imaged to herself *one listener*—ever absent, yet ever present

—she sang as though *he* always heard, and the fervor that gave such thrilling emphasis to her voice, grew wholly out of the vivid reality of that ideal presence.

Ursule, whose qualifications as a nurse were of an indisputably high order, was less frequently in the room than might have been expected. The cause of her absence became apparent before the evening set apart for the concert arrived.

That morning Sylvie had taken out the muslin dress which she had thrice worn in public, and was dismayed to find it covered with mud, and stained with the dye of the old black mantle which had been saturated in her walk through the rain. In sore distress, she had laid the dress upon the bed, and stood pondering upon the possibility of getting it washed and ironed before evening, when Ursule entered. Assuming a matter-of-course air, the latter deliberately removed the discolored muslin, and substituted a dress of rich white silk, adorned with three over-skirts of white "illusion," and placed beside the dress a scarf-like white sash, a pair of satin slippers, and kid gloves.

Maitre Beaujeu had charged her to spare no expense in selecting an appropriate attire for

Sylvie, and the last few days had been occupied by Ursule in its preparation.

Sylvie was expressing, by lively pantomimic gestures, her gratitude for the thoughtful kindness of her master, and her approval of Ursule's choice, when Dame Manot bustled into the apartment, carrying a box addressed to "Mademoiselle de la Roche."

"It was left for you by a servant of the Marquis de St. Amar," said the *concierge*, her eyes sparkling with kindly curiosity.

Sylvie's hands trembled as she received the package, and she placed it on the table unopened. Ursule, with ready tact, diverted the attention of the dame by severing the ribbon which secured the cover, and raising the lid.

First she took out a note in Honorine's handwriting. Sylvie opened it with ill-disguised agitation.

A layer of fresh moss was next removed; beneath lay a coronal of white camellias, and a cluster of the same pure flowers formed into a breast-knot.

Honorine's note said that she was counting the hours which must elapse before night arrived, and she could hear and see her beloved Sylvie, and bade her wear these floral tokens upon her brow and on her bosom in remembrance of the unchanging friendship of Honorine de St. Amar.

Sylvie hardly glanced at the snowy wreath and bouquet, but while Ursule and Dame Manot rapturously expatiated upon their beauty, turned away to prepare a cooling draught for her father.

By and by Ursule closed the box, and set it aside, and Sylvie never once lifted the lid until it was time to commence her toilette for the concert.

To refuse the request of Mademoiselle de St. Amar would be to lack courtesy. When Sylvie was robed in the chaste white silk, with its transparent tulle drapery floating, like woven mist around her, Ursule silently placed the camellia crown upon the singer's shining black hair, and fastened the spotless bouquet on her bosom.

Her fragile form had somewhat rounded and expanded since her illness. She looked less girlish than when she had last appeared before an audience. She seemed to have lived years in a few months. The repose of her manner had once emanated from *unconsciousness of self;* now it sprang from *self-reliance.* The shadow that lingered in her eyes, once so cloudless, told that some grief lay hidden beneath the calm surface, and sent up its reflection out of the mysterious depths into that cerulean haven. Yet she was so completely "queen over herself," that there was something in her presence which impressed others as regal.

When her toilette was complete, she bent over her father, clinging to the hope that he would recognise her; but he gazed into her face with a vacant stare, and talked on in an unconnected and scarcely comprehensible strain. In vain she covered his hands with kisses, and passed her fingers softly through his hair, and laid her flower-crowned head upon his bosom—her caresses were unnoticed.

A few months ago she would have wept; but since she had struggled in fierce combat with herself—since she had known a sorrow which she was forced to bury in the deep recesses of her spirit, tears sprang less readily. Their sweet relief was checked by a self-control that bade her suffer without sign.

Her mother was sitting at the head of the bed, looking less listless than was her wont. The actual danger of the husband, whom she truly loved, had forced her to shake off her constitutional apathy—had made her forget to complain of imaginary or anticipated afflictions—and had caused her inwardly to vow that she would encounter poverty, privation, all manner of calamities without a murmur, if her husband's life were only spared.

She regarded Sylvie's evening toilette with a half-smile, and said, " And so you are wearing at last the white silk dress of which your poor father's extravagance once deprived you? It becomes you amazingly, and that tulle over-dress has a charming effect. I hardly know you, Sylvie; I had no idea you had altered so much in a few months."

Sylvie embraced her, but quickly turned again to her father. She could not bear to leave him thus. Maitre Beaujeu found her bending over the sick man, pertinaciously essaying to attract his attention.

Her master addressed her somewhat more brusquely than had been his custom of late, but his rough manner was only a mask to conceal his agitation. Without one syllable of laudatory comment upon her striking appearance, he remarked that her tablets were not in her girdle, and rated Ursule for forgetfulness, as though all responsibility devolved upon her. The omission was quickly supplied, and the exquisitely wrought chain of gold to which the tablets were attached, lying upon the hueless raiment, and the blue enamel cover, with one word traced in pearls just visible above the belt, gave so much character and significance to the speechless maiden's attire, that Maitre Beaujeu deserved credit for taste as well as forethought.

When Sylvie and her master entered the little retiring-room of the *Salle St. Cecile*, the youthful vocalist was warmly welcomed by Monsieur Le Grand, but coldly greeted by those of his *corps*, who dreaded that their own lesser lights might suffer eclipse through this transcendent luminary.

Monsieur Le Grand had taken care that the rumor of her re-appearance should be widely spread, together with the history of her loss of voice—the sudden and wonderful manner in which her power of song was regained, while she continued mute as regarded speech. The public had marvelled—sympathized—rushed to the *Salle St. Cecile*—crowded it to suffocation, and, being stimulated into high excitement by the novelty of the occasion, were now ready to be astonished and enraptured by talents far inferior to those with which Sylvie had been endowed.

Monsieur Le Grand, who thoroughly understood how to create the greatest impression upon the sensibilities of the mass, instead of letting Sylvie sing a number of airs, had announced her only for Handel's celebrated anthem, "But thou didst not leave his soul," to be given towards the close of the performance. The audience inferred that he feared she might be suddenly stricken dumb in singing, as in speaking, and were on the *qui vive* to witness the possible calamity.

On the same principle, a crowd will throng a theatre to see some desperate mortal earn his hard bread by making a perilous leap, which, some night, will probably cost him his life; or to behold a man's head in a lion's mouth, the frightful fascination arising from the chances that it will eventually be snapped off.

Sylvie's tumultuous greeting from the expectant crowd, when she was led forth by Maitre Beaujeu (who claimed that privilege), may readily be imagined. Those human waves rose and sank, and rose again, and roared, and grew still, and roared again, until the hall seemed filled with a living sea of humanity, stirred by simultaneous motion, and endowed with one voice—that motion an earthquake—that voice a thunder-peal!

Several minutes elapsed before silence was restored, and Maitre Beaujeu commenced the prelude. With the first notes that broke in ringing richness from Sylvie's lips, the clamor burst forth anew with redoubled furor, and so completely drowned her voice that she was obliged to cease singing. Maitre Beaujeu also stopped playing.

Yet not by this vociferous welcome was Sylvie moved, though she trembled until her cloud-like drapery resembled a soft white mist, stirred by light zephyrs. Honorine and her brother occupied seats directly in front of her! One flashing look, and her eyes did not turn in that direction again. They were lifted up above that ocean of human heads, and whatever they beheld was but an air-painted image.

Once more the loud cries of welcome and congratulation died away, and once more Sylvie's voice

——"Like a trumpet that takes
The low note of a viol, that trembles and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,"

rang out as full as a trumpet, as low and sweet as a viol, trembling and triumphing, solemn and clear!

Almost before the breathless stillness at the conclusion of the anthem was broken by new rapture, Sylvie bent, and passed from the sight of the spectators.

Then ensued vehement efforts to recall her, but they were futile. Monsieur Le Grand knew that the desire to hear her hereafter would be heightened by the refusal of an *encore*.

His congratulations to Sylvie were accompanied by a petition that she would engage to join his *corps* for one year, to sing wherever, on the continent or in Great Britain, he might require, receiving five hundred francs per week and her travelling expenses.

Sylvie had no hesitation in accepting this apparently munificent offer, but referred Monsieur Le Grand to her tutor, and Maitre Beaujeu expressed himself contented with the proposition.

"I will call upon Mademoiselle de la Roche to-morrow morning," said Monsieur Le Grand. "She can then sign the contract, and the affair will be closed."

Beaujeu knew that it would not be politic to allow a person in Le Grand's position to witness Sylvie's poverty and the humble manner in which her family lived. He therefore objected to the proposed visit, urging as a reason that Monsieur de la Roche was dangerously ill.

Le Grand regarded him suspiciously, as though he inferred that the musician meant by this demur to make difficulties and finally demand higher terms; Beaujeu, comprehending his look, replied with some asperity and no little dignity:

"In objecting to your calling upon my pupil, to-morrow, at the risk of disturbing her father and thus distressing her, I found no fault with your proposition. I should have told you frankly if I had done so. If pen and paper are at hand, the contract can as well be drawn up and signed *to night* before we leave the hall."

The necessary writing materials were speedily procured, the contract was duly prepared, signed, and witnessed. A copy was then made, to which, also, the signatures were attached. One paper was delivered to Sylvie, the other kept by Monsieur Le Grand. The young singer was formally bound to follow her profession, in whatever locality he directed, for the next year.

The time occupied by this business transaction allowed the crowd to disperse. Doctor Souvestre, as Mademoiselle de la Roche's physician, had gained admission to the retiring-room; and, while

Monsieur Le Grand was arranging some minor matters with Beaujeu, entertained Sylvie by repeating the encomiums he had overheard.

Sylvie had cherished a hope that, as she passed into the street, she would meet—Honorine; "Honorine" was all she said to herself. It was near the entrance of the *Salle St. Cecile* that she had encountered her once before. As the youthful vocalist came forth, leaning upon Beaujeu's arm, and with Doctor Souvestre on the other side earnestly talking to her, she scarcely dared to lift her eyes. From beneath her long lashes, however, she soon saw that there was but one carriage waiting. It was that which Beaujeu had engaged. The equipage of the Marquis was not visible.

Honorine had been carried off by Madame de la Tour, who probably had accompanied her to the concert for this very purpose.

Sylvie looked up with a disappointed expression. A tall and stately form emerged from the shadow thrown by the building, and appeared to be approaching her. But the figure did not pause, as seemed its first intention. The hat, lifted in passing, showed the intellectual countenance of the Marquis de St. Amar. He did not speak a single word; and Sylvie felt as every true artist, who is also a true woman, must have felt, that, unpraised by the man she loved, all praise was breath only, and the triumph so glorious in the eyes of the great world was unsatisfactory, incomplete in her own eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW HOME.

HONORINE was excited and annoyed to the verge of positive anger when she found herself irresistibly hurried into the carriage by Madame de la Tour as soon as the concert was over. To wait until Sylvie came forth to join her and implore an explanation of her late singular conduct, had been Mademoiselle de St. Amar's earnest desire. When her aunt so warmly opposed her wishes and insisted on her returning home immediately, the possibility that she had something to do with the cessation of Sylvie's visits, for the first time flashed through Honorine's mind. This suspicion rendered her only more determined that the interrupted intercourse should be renewed; though, indeed, she had long since resolved upon *that*, and had only waited for some favorable opportunity to carry out her intention. She turned to appeal from her aunt to her brother, and to ask the latter to deliver a message to Sylvie, but he had disappeared.

Honorine did not retire that night until she heard his footstep in the corridor, and rushing out to meet him, eagerly inquired:

"Did you see her after I left?"

"See whom?"

"Why, Mademoiselle Sylvie, of course."

"Yes, I saw her leaving the concert-hall."

"And you spoke to her, of course?"

"No."

"How singular! But perhaps she was surrounded by people. Whom was she with?"

"Monsieur Beaujeu and a gentleman."

"I thought she knew no gentleman. Was he young and handsome?"

"Yes, if I am a judge of good looks."

"But why did you not join her and find out who he was? I should be vexed if she formed other agreeable acquaintances, and ceased to miss ours. I have made up my mind to see her myself, and nothing can prevent me."

The next day when Maitre Beaujeu came to give his lesson, Honorine greeted him by emphatically closing the piano, and leaning upon it with an air which might be interpreted into a declaration of rebellion and independence.

"I want no music to-day—I am not in the

vein," she began. "I do not mean to take a lesson. I want to see Mademoiselle Sylvie, and nothing else can content me. My aunt would not allow me to linger until she came out last night. But I tell you I *must* and *will* see her! I cannot call at her present lodgings, for you say that there is but one room, and her father is dangerously ill; besides, I suppose it would not be proper for my brother to accompany me there; and Madame de la Tour would not allow me to go with a domestic. Now that Mademoiselle Sylvie's success is assured, why does she not occupy apartments where I could visit her? You must make her do so. Positively, you must."

"To hear is to obey!" replied Beaujeu, good-humoredly. "As your suggestion is unquestionably wise, I will promise to act upon it."

"Will you, dear, good Monsieur Beaujeu? and will you do it *at once?* Yes, you must act *at once!* I am impatient to see Sylvie, and I hate delays. Do go in search of apartments instantly. I cannot take a lesson to-day; therefore you have an hour at your disposal."

Beaujeu not only found it impossible to refuse, but he saw the propriety of the request, and took his leave, promising to apprise his refractory pupil as soon as he had found a fitting abode for the young singer.

There was little difficulty in finding handsome or humble furnished apartments in Paris. An *entresol* in the *Rue d'Angoulême*, close to the *Champs Elysées*, struck Maitre Beaujeu so favorably that he secured it within an hour after he commenced his search. An *entresol*, as our readers are probably aware, is the story between the ground floor (*rez de chaussée*) and the first story. The ceilings are low, and it is generally a more economical residence than any other desirable portion of the house. The suite of rooms which pleased the musician combined elegance and economy,—the locality was charming,—the rent four hundred francs per month. The apartments consisted of a parlor, dining-room, three bed-rooms, kitchen, and servants' apartments. The furniture, without being showy, was convenient and abundant, and chosen in unexceptionable taste.

The *concierge* recommended two excellent female domestics, who would divide the work between them. After making an appointment to see these necessary additions to the household on the morrow, Beaujeu returned to the *Faubourg St. Germain*.

" Ask Mademoiselle de St. Amar," he said to a servant, "if she will allow me to give her a lesson now, and say that I have complied with her request."

Honorine came dancing into the room, accompanied by her brother.

Beaujeu's prompt execution of her orders caused her spirits to mount too high for a lesson to be thought of on that day. Her master must go at once, she said, to Sylvie, and prepare her for a speedy removal.

This command of the self-constituted little sovereign was given with such graceful imperiousness that the musician had no alternative but to comply.

The Marquis had been unusually taciturn during Beaujeu's brief visit.

"Are you not glad, brother? Are you not rejoiced that we shall be able to see Mademoiselle Sylvie once more? Now there can surely be no impropriety in my visiting her, and in your accompanying me. Say, are you not glad?"

"I am always glad when you are glad, little sister," replied the Marquis, with inexplicable gravity.

A few moments after he ordered his phaeton, and drove away.

Shall we follow him on his mission through the streets of Paris?

If we may judge from the thoughtful yet pleased expression of his countenance, he has some agreeable object in view. He first stops at Pleyel's dépôt of pianos, and after carefully trying a number of instruments, selects the finest, and orders it to be sent to the apartments hired for Monsieur de la Roche in the *Rue d'Angoulême*, numero ——

The phaeton next draws up before a *magasin de meubles;* here he chooses a richly-carved rosewood library, rather diminutive in size, suitable to a small apartment, and desires it to be sent to the same locality as the piano. After this he visits a *magasin*, celebrated for its collection of choice books; here he passes an hour, gathering together a sufficient number of standard works to fill the shelves of the little library, and himself writing a line in each volume. The next place that the Marquis enters is a *fabrique des jardinières hydrauliques.* After inspecting all the beautiful inventions for holding plants that may bloom in the drawing-room, he orders the most tasteful to be sent immediately to a certain florist. These *jardinières* are constructed with a fountain in the centre, which sends up a tiny jet of water amidst a parterre of bright blossoms. The Marquis reaches the florist's soon after the *jardinière* is received, and gives the most minute directions concerning the plants which it must contain when it is sent, on the morrow, to its final destination. A marble bust, by a distinguished sculptor, completes the purchases of the nobleman. It is a Saint Cecilia, with upraised eyes and parted lips, whose seraphic look conveys the impression that her song is not for the ears of mortals.

After leaving Mademoiselle de St. Amar, Beaujeu made his way to the Rue St. Denis, and, without preface, informed Sylvie that suitable apartments were engaged for her, and that she must prepare to enter them in a couple of days. When her characteristic prudence caused her to object to this step, and pronounce it premature, he informed her that he was the best judge of the fitness of the proceeding;—it was absolutely necessary, he asserted, that she should occupy rooms where Monsieur Le Grand might call upon her to transact any necessary business (he took care not to allude to any other possible visitors), and concluded by saying that her father would be benefited by change of air and additional comfort.

This last suggestion overcame Sylvie's scruples. The possessions of the De la Roches were too few to consume much time in packing. Everything was ready at the hour Beaujeu had appointed for the removal. Monsieur de la Roche was to be transported to his new home upon a litter, with Beaujeu and Mathieu walking by his side. Ursule, Sylvie, and her mother went in advance to prepare for and receive the invalid.

We will not attempt to paint the surprise and pleasure of the feminine trio who first reached the delightful abode selected by the musician. Before they had leisure fully to examine the apartments, the sick man was brought in and laid upon his comfortable bed. The fresh air and the gentle motion produced a soporific effect, for he had fallen into a quiet slumber.

Sylvie watched him awhile, as he slept, but finding that he did not stir, left her mother and Mathieu beside him, and joined her master in the parlor.

He was seated at the piano playing, and did not notice her entrance until she traced upon her tablets the words, "How kind of you to have thought of this!" and held them before his eyes.

"Truly, I deserve no credit," answered Beaujeu, rising. "I do not remember to have seen this instrument when I engaged the rooms, and yet it is one of Pleyel's best."

Sylvie pointed to the little library, and wrote:

"What rare enjoyment I shall derive from those books!"

"Books? Ah—yes—that library is really an exquisite piece of furniture; but I'm an old dolt, for I did not notice *that* either; and I do not remember seeing those flowers growing so beautifully, with the fountain playing in their centre, though one might suppose that *jardinière*, which fills the whole window, and is really a miniature garden, was too striking to escape the notice and admiration of anybody with a pair of eyes; and I did not remark that St. Cecilia, which has a face so like yours—yours when you are singing, I mean. Truly, I shall begin to fancy that age is telling upon me! At all events, I am glad you are satisfied. Now I must leave you, for I have lessons due all day. I will give your address to Monsieur Le Grand in case he desires to wait upon you."

Flowers had always a strong attraction for Sylvie, and when she found herself alone, she examined the floral treasures of the jardinière more minutely. A circle of heliotrope girdled the little fountain and filled the air with penetrating perfume. Heliotrope! That flower had associations sweet as its own breath for Sylvie—she did not dare to dwell upon them—but turned away with a smothered sigh, stifling those dangerous rising memories. But wherever she went, the haunting fragrance of the heliotrope pursued her, and conjured visions of the past before her eyes, and called back words to ring in her ears that stirred her strangely, sweetly, and yet most painfully.

To divert her mind from these perilous thoughts, she unclosed the glass doors of the bookcase, and glancing over the titles, took down a volume of Racine. As she opened the book her eyes fell upon the words, "*Mademoiselle Sylvie de la Roche.*" Her *name* written on the otherwise blank page! Could it be possible? Maitre Beaujeu had distinctly declared that he had not noticed the library—it could not have been supplied by him! She opened another volume, and another, and another, still the same name appeared within. The books were Sylvie's—selected for her—and—by *whom?* She thought of ——; she would have answered, "Honorine," if she had been asked of whom she thought. But the handwriting was not hers. Were those characters wholly unfamiliar? Upon the little porcelain slate, now lying in her trunk, were there not a few lines still uneffaced?—and in that very hand?

When Ursule entered she found Sylvie standing by the library lost in thought, her eyes fixed upon the writing.

"I have come to bid adieu," said the spinster with assumed calmness. "I find your little establishment in perfect order. Maitre Beaujeu is a wonderful manager. He has engaged two excellent servants. Janette is a middle-aged woman and will cook for you. Rosine is a strong, able-handed girl, and will keep the rooms in order, attend to the table, etc., etc. As neither of them can read, you will have some difficulty in communicating with them yourself, but I have spared you all the trouble I can by giving directions."

Sylvie's caress said, "You always spare one trouble."

"I must go now," resumed Ursule. "I will come to see you often, and you must let me assist in taking care of your father. I shall miss seeing you *every day*, Sylvie—I hardly know——" Her lips trembled, and she could not finish her sentence.

Sylvie's tablets were in her hand, but before she could write a line Ursule had hurried out of the room.

The warm-hearted dress-maker had not before uttered a word which betrayed how severely she suffered from this separation. Her intercourse with Sylvie had awakened a thousand pleasant emotions that brightened her desolate life. She often thought that she knew what a mother's happy sensations must be through the affection she experienced for this young girl. Strange to say, Beaujeu had been conscious of a similar feeling. Sylvie was to him as an own and only child, and the sole happiness, sole prosperity of his existence had emanated from her. If Sylvie's parents were unfitted for their holy office, two beings had been sent to occupy their places who loved her with the tender devotion, the thoughtful solicitude, the earnest seeking after her good, which characterize parental affection in its strength and purity.

CHAPTER XVI.

LUMINOUS CLOUD.

HONORINE'S impetuous spirit could not brook delay where her affections were concerned. She admitted that it would be more proper to allow a few days to elapse, that her friend might become familiar with her new residence, before she sought her there; but, at the same time, declared her intention of visiting Sylvie the very next morning after she took possession of her apartments in the Rue d'Angoulême.

The objections and representations of Madame de la Tour were unceremoniously set aside by this child of impulse. She listened to her aunt with the patience that good-breeding demanded, but when she concluded, abruptly turned to her brother and said:

"I will be ready at two o'clock. Will you not accompany me, Stanislaus? If not, I will take Claudine."

Claudine was a trustworthy *femme de chambre*, who had been Honorine's nurse during her childhood, and was now promoted to the higher office of lady's maid.

The Marquis hesitated, reluctant to refuse, though unwilling to consent; but finally yielded under protest to the tiny tyrant's despotic will.

Sylvie was at her father's bedside when the cards of her visitors were received. This was fortunate, for it gave her ample time to compose herself before entering the drawing-room. Indeed, her mien was so tranquil and self-possessed, that Honorine, as she embraced her again and again with hearty warmth, chided her for coldness. Yet Sylvie returned the greeting of Mademoiselle de St. Amar as though unaware of any other presence. When, at last, she saluted the Marquis, who stood silently by, it was without extending her hand or lifting her eyes.

"This apartment is charming," said Honorine, glancing approvingly round the room. "Now I may come and see you often, may I not? How cruel you have been to forsake me for so long! You owe me an explanation before you have the right to forgiveness. Come, confess! Tell me what prompted you to behave so strangely?"

Sylvie raised her downcast eyes beseechingly, and Honorine could not resist their mute pleading.

"I will not ask you, then," she responded, generously. "I cannot abide mysteries, but I will tolerate *this* if you will promise that our friendship shall not again suffer interruption. Come, promise!"

Sylvie hesitated, evidently troubled and uncertain; then she wrote upon her tablets, "Who can answer for the future?"

"Will you not promise to receive my visits?" asked Honorine, in wounded accents.

What could Sylvie answer? Could she cast aside friendship so warmly tendered? Could she trample under foot affection so pure and disinterested?

She wrote: "I must ever be grateful for your visits, and receive them thankfully."

"*Receive me*, that is all I ask," replied Honorine, with returning vivacity. "Remember our compact, and I will trouble you with no more questions."

The young girls seated themselves upon a *causeuse* drawn close to the fire, for it was a bright, cold day in February.

The Marquis, who with painful anxiety had awaited Sylvie's reply to his sister's inquiry, now wandered restlessly about the room. After awhile he paused before the *jardinière* and examined its luxuriant bloom, to see if his orders were faithfully executed, and symmetry of outline and blending harmony of coloring had been preserved in the disposition of the plants.

When Sylvie's delighted eyes first rested upon that bed of odorous blossoms, the miniature fountain in the centre was sending up sparkling jets, that scattered a dewy spray upon the surrounding leaves; but in something less than an hour it had ceased playing, to her great regret.

The Marquis had learned at what time she was expected, and had taken care to have the fountain set in motion before she entered her new home. He now, unreflectingly, touched a spring that acted upon the hydraulic machinery; then, suddenly fearing that he had betrayed his secret, walked away with ill-assumed *nonchalance.*

The silvery sound of the falling drops struck on Sylvie's quick ears; she turned suddenly—for the first time that day her eyes met those of the Marquis. One conscious, transient look told all that she had divined, yet scarcely dared to believe. The finely-toned piano—the richly-stored bookcase—the marble St. Cecilia—the rare plants—all that ministered to her tastes—all that Maitre

Beaujeu had declared he had not seen when he had engaged the apartments, had been supplied by a guardian hand, the invisible influence of which she had felt, even when she denied to herself its agency. Yet why should that hand plant flowers in her path—open volumes for the cultivation of her mind—place statues to charm her eyes—or send music to aid her voice and gladden her home? Ah! why indeed?

Honorine was puzzled by the paling of Sylvie's cheek, the increased rapidity of her breathing, and the tightening pressure of the hand that she [Honorine] chanced to hold. The Marquis had not uttered a single word, and so pointedly kept aloof that his sister, when she saw the direction of Sylvie's glance, fancied that their young hostess might be hurt by his singular and inexplicable conduct.

"Brother, why do you not come and talk to us? How dull and tiresome you are this morning."

"That implies that I am sometimes otherwise; thanks for the admission!" replied the Marquis, with a faint attempt at gaiety.

"You are not half so agreeable of late as you used to be!" answered Honorine, pettishly. "You have not seemed like yourself for some weeks, and you don't appear to take interest in anything that interests me."

"Perhaps, then, you can dispense with the wet-blanket of my society for a little while? I have an engagement, and if you purpose to prolong your visit to Mademoiselle de la Roche, I will leave you and call in half an hour. May I?"

"Of course you may. You are so stupid and fidgety that we certainly do not want you. Do we, Mademoiselle Sylvie? Has he not your leave to depart?"

Sylvie bowed.

Too promptly to be suspected of the compliment of a passing regret—at least so the Marquis thought, as he left the room.

The half hour doubled itself before he returned. He found an addition to the party, which the young ladies would probably have pronounced an agreeable one. A gentleman was talking to them in an animated strain; they were laughing merrily at some anecdote which he was recounting with captivating fluency and spirit.

The nobleman at once recognised the young gentleman whom he had seen with Sylvie when she left the *Salle St. Cecile* a few evenings previous.

"Come, Honorine," said the Marquis to his sister, without taking a seat, "I have only time to escort you home."

"How soon you have returned!" replied Honorine, poutingly, but rising as she spoke. "Adieu, Mademoiselle Sylvie; I am coming to see you again very soon; to-morrow, if you will let me."

Sylvie needed no language to express her glad consent.

To the Marquis she merely courtesied with the same graceful coldness as before.

As he was quitting the apartment, he turned almost without being aware of what he was doing, and rapidly scrutinized the gentleman with whom he left her alone.

"You seem to have been very much entertained by Mademoiselle Sylvie's visitor," he remarked to his sister, on their way home.

"Yes—he is a most delightful person; he relates charming anecdotes, and in quite a dramatic style," she replied. "Dr. Souvestre is his name. Mademoiselle Sylvie tells me that he attended her during her long illness, and is now the physician of her father."

"Rather a juvenile doctor," replied her brother, drily, "and not greatly occupied with his patients, since he has leisure for the amusement of two young ladies at this hour of the day."

"Oh, Mademoiselle Sylvie says that he always remains and talks to her after visiting her father, and I am sure she must be glad to listen to such an agreeable person, and one who was so kind and attentive when she was ill. She must lead such a solitary life!"

The Marquis bit his lips and looked thoughtful and troubled. His sister prattled on without waiting for replies or heeding his taciturnity.

The next morning he left the house before she appeared at the breakfast table. Honorine expressed a hope that he would return soon after noon.

"Where do you wish him to take you?" asked Madame de la Tour, graciously.

"To see Mademoiselle Sylvie, of course," answered Honorine, with a rebellious air. "We have not met for so long, that I intend to bore her with visits as a punishment for her staying away from me. If my brother does not return in time, I mean to take Claudine with me."

"That will not be necessary," replied the diplomatic aunt. "I will accompany you myself."

"You?" exclaimed Honorine, in astonishment.

"Yes, *I!* Is it very wonderful that I should think it proper to go where my niece chooses to go? The sanction of my presence is needed for her to escape remark, perhaps censure."

Madame de la Tour had a double object in view. In the first place, if *she* accompanied Honorine, there was no need of her brother's presence; in the second, she trusted that during this visit her quick perception might enable her to gather material for a fresh plot, through which she might possibly work out a new and more lasting breach.

She was not disappointed in her calculations.

Dr. Souvestre had just visited his patient, and was sitting in the drawing-room with Sylvie, when Madame de la Tour and Mademoiselle de St. Amar were announced.

Sylvie was not in the least aware of Madame de la Tour's sentiments of animosity, and did not disguise that she was complimented by her visit.

The lively sallies of Souvestre broke pleasantly through the formality which the presence of Honorine's aunt gave to the conversation, and Sylvie smiled gratefully upon him, never dreaming that her look of approval might be misconstrued by him or any one present.

Madame de la Tour did not need to suspect that this handsome and polished young man was Sylvie's admirer; it was enough for that ready-witted lady that she had seen him, and could report that he was a lover, it mattered not with how little foundation. She had stored the desired *matériel* for her *finesse* to work upon, and her internal satisfaction made her particularly condescending to Sylvie.

Mademoiselle de St. Amar was at once delighted and deceived; and when, as they were returning home, her aunt not only listened to, but echoed, the praises bestowed upon the young singer, Honorine reproached herself for ever having imagined it possible that Madame de la Tour could have taken any part in producing the late estrangement.

When Honorine met her brother at dinner, and very naturally commenced talking to him of Sylvie, she was surprised to find that he was already aware of the recently paid visit. He had received "*a full and graphic account*," he answered, somewhat sarcastically, from their aunt. He did not add that she had confidently described Dr. Souvestre as Sylvie's favored lover, and had thus confirmed his own suspicions—or rather his jealous fears, for he had scarcely ground to build actual suspicions upon.

Monsieur de la Roche had visibly improved since he had exchanged the close atmosphere of the Rue St. Denis for the purer air of the Rue d'Angoulême. On the fourth morning after his removal he opened his eyes, and gazing around the elegant apartment in which he lay, thought himself in a delicious dream.

He beheld his wife at the foot of the bed, and at once noted the change in her whole appearance. She wore a neat black silk dress, and a most becoming cap. She was no longer bending double to ply her needle, but held in her hand an open book which she appeared to be perusing with interest. He had not seen her look so young and comely for many years.

While he was gazing in dreamy wonder, the sound of a piano fell upon his ears, accompanied by a melodious voice. Surely that deep, resounding contralto was Sylvie's voice! That voice which he had believed hushed in silence for ever! It touched a cord that started a train of memory. He recalled the hour when he last heard those mellifluous tones—remembered his accident, and the sudden and marvellous restoration of his daughter's vocal powers which ensued—but what had followed? Where was he?

"Marguerite," he said, feebly.

His wife dropped her book, and started to her feet.

"Marguerite!" he repeated with more energy, "is that really you? and is that our Sylvie's voice? Have the dark clouds which shadowed our lives turned out their silver lining at last?"

"The clouds have gone!" returned Madame de la Roche, with a burst of grateful emotion. "You know me—you are yourself again—you will recover—there is no cloud now! God be thanked!"

"Have I been ill, then? and for a long time?"

His wife, as soon as she could sufficiently command herself, related all the events that had occurred since his accident and during his period of unconsciousness.

He was so much overcome by the narrative, that he could only gasp out—

"It is real, then? No card-house building, as Maitre Beaujeu called it; the walls will not crumble around me? And that patient, toiling, heaven-blest child is the sun that gave their luminous lining to our clouds!"

Mathieu, who was always in attendance, had been a silent witness of this scene. Unprompted, he hastened to summon Sylvie.

Who could attempt to describe the depth and intensity of her joy when her father's arms were once more about her neck, and, coupling her name with tenderest epithets, he poured forth his thankfulness and love?

She could not be induced to leave his side that day, not even to receive the visit of Honorine, who came accompanied only by her *femme de chambre.* Madame de la Roche usually shrank from strangers; but, in this instance, she readily complied with her daughter's request, and presented herself to Mademoiselle de St. Amar, to apologize for Sylvie's absence, and communicate its happy cause. If Madame de la Roche had experienced any timidity, it would have been rapidly dispelled by the ready sympathy with her joy which Honorine evinced, by her ingenuous praises of Sylvie, and by the affectionate manner in which she dwelt upon the brilliant career that apparently awaited the songstress. When the gratified mother returned to her husband's apartment, her face was almost as radiant as that of her daughter.

The invalid, as he looked upon his wife's beaming countenance, could not help saying, "You believe in *good luck* at last, eh, Marguerite?"

"Do not remind me how ungrateful and undeserving I have been!" she answered in accents of self-reproach. "Sylvie has taught me to *trust*, and the lesson will never be unlearned, come what may!"

When Honorine, the ever-devoted, paid her daily visit on the morrow, she was accompanied by her brother. Though Sylvie's greeting of the former was unusually animated, her deportment towards the latter was as reserved and constrained as ever.

The Marquis congratulated her upon her father's convalescence, and asked if he might be permitted to see him. These were the first words he had addressed to her since the happy day when they last walked in Honorine's conservatory together —the day that preceded so many weeks of sad separation.

Sylvie looked surprised, but pleased, at the request, and retired to apprise her father. In a few moments she re-appeared with her mother, who begged the Marquis to have the goodness to accompany her to the chamber of her husband.

Monsieur de la Roche was so completely bewildered by this unexpected visit that he could not recover himself sufficiently to be led into any extravagance by his elation. The Marquis took a seat beside him, and, after a few courteous inquiries, hoped that he would shortly be restored to complete health, adding that a friend of his wanted a secretary, and he had taken the liberty of recommending Monsieur de la Roche. The position, he went on to say, was a confidential one; and, independent of a liberal salary, his associations would be of a kind that a man of education and refinement must find agreeable.

It was well that Monsieur de la Roche had been so completely subdued by illness—well that he was almost speechless from surprise; for the few words of thanks and acceptance he was alone able to utter made a highly favorable impression on the Marquis. None of the enthusiast's olden bombast, none of his florid exaggeration of sentiment found vent, and his rampant egotism was completely laid at rest.

The Marquis arrived at the conclusion that Maitre Beaujeu, from whom he had learned many particulars concerning Sylvie's father, had done that individual singular injustice.

The nobleman, when he returned to the drawing-room, where his sister and Sylvie were sitting in loving proximity, did not make known the object of his visit to the invalid. Thanks would have been painful to him, and he considered that none were due.

In serving Sylvie, though he believed her heart bestowed upon another, he took as much delight as though that precious gift were his own. Love, that deserves the name, is ever purely disinterested; it seeks the well-being of the object beloved, without craving after gratitude, without asking the compensation of returned affection, without the remotest reference to self! It would have given infinite joy to a nature as large and liberal as the Marquis possessed to watch over Sylvie from the distance, to shower good gifts upon her with an invisible hand, to smoothe her path of life, and guide her steps unseen—to secure her happiness at any sacrifice, even that of yielding her to one whom she loved better.

The health of Monsieur de la Roche now rapidly improved. A revolution had taken place in his character as remarkable as the change in the mental organization of his wife. His tendency to indulge in visionary projects remained, but it was kept in check by a promised reality which would require prudence and energy. Through the force of habit, Madame de la Roche's anxious fears and gloomy anticipations were now and then re-wakened, but they were quickly banished by the remembrance of the joyful certainty with which she had been blessed.

Let it not be supposed that Sylvie, because she appeared to be free from the striking faults of her parents, was absolved from the sequences of the great law of inheritance. That these failings must be hereditarily transmitted to her was inevitable; but, as we have said before, the tendencies derived from her sanguine father were counterbalanced by the precisely opposite qualities inherited from her melancholy mother. Then, again, the unhappy results of the too palpable shortcomings of both acted as a warning. Besides this, Sylvie possessed remarkable strength and individuality of character. She could not copy any one, even a parent. Her actions were never the mere reflex of the actions of others. She could not forego the right of election, and complacently walk in the path others had trodden, and take it for granted that it must be the best, because it was beaten by their familiar feet. She must examine, judge, determine—avoid or accept for herself. A sense of responsibility, early implanted by what we vaguely call "circumstance," imparted this self-reliance, and gave to her character its almost severe uprightness, its striking force and dignity.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOB AND THE SINGER.

THE plans of the enterprising Monsieur Le Grand, who built high hopes upon the powerful attraction of the new vocalist, and looked forward to a brilliant musical season, were unexpectedly frustrated.

The revolutionary spirit, which for a long period had agitated the murmuring masses in Paris, and given forth, at intervals, a sound like low mutterings of distant thunder before the storm breaks forth in fury, now began to assume a distinct voice and take a definite and menacing shape. The month of February, 1848, was advancing and rapidly ripening those portentous events which, culminating, burst into action on the 24th, and led to that fierce struggle when France went mad with the fantasy that she could become a permanent republic without possessing the first fundamental elements of republicanism.

Monsieur Le Grand, though not wanting in patriotic feeling, loved his art, and the accumulation of gain by its successful administration, far better than politics. Whether France remained a monarchy or proved herself capable of becoming a republic, was a matter of secondary importance to him, so long as music stirred the hearts of the million, and concert-rooms were crowded. But after the inauspicious twenty-fourth of February, when Louis Philippe trembled upon the throne from which he was shortly after ignominiously driven, never to reascend, trade was at a standstill, shops were closed, places of public amusement almost deserted.

Occasional brief lulls of the popular excitement did not deceive Monsieur Le Grand; his prophetic spirit warned him that the struggle would be of protracted duration, and keep the public mind unattuned to harmony for months to come. The judicious leader wisely turned his face towards other less distracted lands, and resolved upon an immediate tour through Great Britain. His musical *corps* was ordered to hasten all necessary preparations, and apprised that he expected to depart in a few days.

As we have already stated, Maitre Beaujeu was a regular member of Monsieur Le Grand's company; he would not, therefore, be separated from his beloved pupil. Although he was nominally and actually her guardian, it was indispensable to her comfort and respectability that she should have a protector, companion, or attendant of her sex. When this necessity suggested itself to Beaujeu (whose watchfulness never slumbered), he he at once sought Ursule, and with little difficulty persuaded her to accompany them. He also induced Monsieur Le Grand to include her travelling expenses in those of Sylvie, and to make a small addition to the weekly salary of the latter, that she might be able to remunerate Ursule for her time and services.

Monsieur and Madame de la Roche contemplated yielding up their daughter without more sorrow than was natural; they had become wonderfully forbearing and reasonable. Sylvie's own emotions were of a conflicting character. The pain of parting from her father, before he was fully restored to health, counterbalanced the pleasure she experienced at the prospect of seeing foreign countries, gaining information, and entering fully upon the labors and glories of her profession.

The duties of Mathieu had been lightened by the convalescence of Monsieur de la Roche, and the poor cripple could not help feeling that the sole bright epoch of his shadowed existence was drawing to a close, and that his occupation would shortly be gone. From the moment that he heard of the proposed journey, his homely countenance betokened the most poignant grief; and though he said nothing, heavy sighs would burst from his laboring breast, as he crept about the room, and he became so absent that the invalid for the first time was forced to rebuke him for inattention.

This change in the deportment of the unfortunate boy did not escape Beaujeu; he comprehended its cause, and was readily moved to pity.

One morning as he was conversing with De la Roche, and noticing the languid motions and drooping mien of the ungainly attendant who was brushing his master's clothes, the musician came to a sudden resolution. Kindly impulses appeared of late to be ever uppermost in his nature.

"Le Grand cannot stir without his *valet!*" he said, addressing the invalid. "My toilette does not compare badly with his, nowadays, but I have never indulged myself with the luxury of a *valet.* As I shall have a young lady under my charge to whom a servant might be useful, I have a great mind to engage one. What do you think? Mathieu appears to be tolerably handy and tolerably faithful—you are almost well enough to spare him—would you object to my taking him with us?"

With what a gasp and bound the deformed boy leaped from his corner, dropping coat and brush at the words! His hands clasped, his uncouth features distorted by the sudden transition from despair to hope, he ejaculated:

"Take me! Take me with you! I will be the most faithful of servants! Say you will take me, or I shall die!"

"Young man, you are oppressively tragic!" replied Beaujeu, with mock gravity. "If a breath can save your life, we will not permit your immediate dissolution; you *shall* go with us! There—that will do. Now, don't interrupt us with any grimaces or gymnastic exhibitions. If you want to dance upon your head, go to the kitchen, and give Janette the benefit of the feat. Go! go!"

If Mathieu, when he rushed from his new master's sight, did not literally obey this bidding, he probably vented his ecstasy in a manner not less fantastical and comical.

Great and ill-concealed was the satisfaction of Madame de la Tour when she learned that Sylvie was so shortly to leave Paris. Honorine, on the other hand, was inconsolable, and she made this approaching parting her excuse for spending every moment that she could absent herself from home with her friend. Claudine always accompanied her upon these visits. The Marquis had not made his appearance in the Rue d'Angoulême since his interview with Monsieur de la Roche.

The revolution had burst forth by fits and starts, led by an invisible and nameless leader; and, as the excitement died away after each brief crisis, the higher classes entertained a hope that the proposed abdication of Louis Philippe would restore peace and order. It was during one of these apparently calm intervals that Honorine entreated Sylvie to accompany her to the Boulevards to a certain jeweller's (one of the few who kept his shop open), and assist in selecting a handsome snuff box for a parting token for Maitre Beaujeu.

The young girls were only accompanied in their expedition by the *femme de chambre* of Mademoiselle de St. Amar.

The equipage of the Marquis had reached the Boulevards, and was approaching its destination, when the alarmed occupants of the carriage suddenly became aware that the city was again in commotion, and on the eve of some fresh *émeute.*

Groups of savage-looking men were gathered here and there, talking loudly and gesticulating fiercely —others were occupied in tearing up the pavement and completing barricades commenced some days previous.

Honorine, at the entreaty of her more prudent attendant, had given the order to hasten home as rapidly as possible, when the sound of martial music, half drowned by the frantic shouts of the populace, broke on their startled ears. The carriage was suddenly turned, the horses dashed off into a gallop. Unfortunately the tumult came from the direction in which they were going. Down an adjacent street rushed a band of turbulent workmen, their blue *blouses* torn and flying in the wind—their grim faces rendered hideous with passion—their bare and brawny arms encumbered with clubs and other instruments of attack.

Claudine leant out of the carriage to reconnoitre; but in an instant drew back terror-stricken, and crying as she hastily closed the window, "*Le drapeau rouge!* The red flag! The red flag! They are carrying the red flag, and they are close upon us!"

The insurgents had substituted this ominous red banner for the tri-colored flag of France.

The coachman lashed his horses; but the high-spirited animals, unused to the whip, reared and plunged without making progress. The arms upon the panels of the carriage caught the attention of the mob, and in a moment the coach was surrounded.

Shouts of "*A bas les aristocrats!* Down with the aristocrats! Down with the aristocrats!" rose on every side.

In another instant the coachman was torn from his box, and buffeted about among the crowd. The gaily dressed *chasseur* was pulled down, and his rich livery stripped off and rent to tatters. Both domestics were soon lost to the sight of the three terrified and unprotected women who helplessly witnessed the outrage.

The violent blow of a rude fist shattered the window-pane; another blow on the opposite side sent a shower of broken glass into the carriage. One sharp piece struck the white forehead of Honorine, and a bright red current trickled down her face.

At this sight Claudine lost all self-command, and her piercing shrieks mingled with the roars of the brutal men who now thrust their ferocious faces into the carriage, charging those within to shout, "*Vive la Republique!* Long live the Republic!"

Claudine, not comprehending the order, wrung her hands, and sobbed and screamed hysterically, begging for mercy.

Honorine was struck as speechless as Sylvie through extreme terror. Pale and voiceless, the trembling maidens shrank into a corner, clinging to each other, and too much appalled for thought or action.

The doors of the carriage were plucked from their hinges—the steps let down—infuriated men mounted on either side, and thrust themselves half into the coach!

The shrieks of Claudine were redoubled, but still she took no heed of the command to join in the cry of "*Vive la Republique!*" One of the men seized her in his strong arms, and in spite of her wild struggles, dragged her into the street.

Honorine sprang up aghast, clasped her hands imploringly—tried to speak, but fell back into a deep swoon!

With a jeering laugh another man stretched his arms towards her, but before she was in his grasp, Sylvie had lifted her insensible form and clasped it tightly to her bosom.

The next instant she, too, was forcibly drawn from the carriage, and stood in the midst of the enraged crowd; but she had not relinquished her hold, and Honorine lay close to her wildly throbbing heart.

She knew that there was no mercy to be expected, even for women, and that the lives of two young girls, whom the maddened mob looked upon as obstinate aristocrats, would be meet food to satisfy or feed their fury. With the imminent peril, her paralysing fears vanished—her presence of mind — her self-possession returned. She thought not of her own danger (there was none for her, if the insurgents were only made aware that she herself was no aristocrat, but a child of the people), it was the peril of the beloved friend lying senseless in her arms that quickened her wits. Truly it is

——"Very good for strength
To know that some one needs us to be strong!"

With that need for another, a strange, unnatural calmness, a marvellous power, was infused into the strong soul of the feeble girl.

As the command to cry "*Vive la Republique!*" was echoed around her, coupled with savage threats, she lifted one arm with a gesture of command, then her glorious voice pealed forth in trumpet tones—

> "Allons, enfans de la Patrie,
> Le jour de gloire est arrivé!"

and the stirring words of the Marseilles hymn boomed over the heads of the multitude.

Her hat had fallen off; her dark, luxuriant hair streamed in wild confusion to her knees; her large, blue eyes were dilated to a fiery blackness. The look of horror upon her blanched countenance melted into one of heroic resolve. One arm was still upraised; the other supported the light form of her unconscious companion, without seeming to tax her strength.

Over Sylvie's arm, as she sang, drooped Honorine's head; her hat, also, was gone—her chestnut hair unbound; the bright blood still oozed slowly from her temples, and splashed, drop by drop, upon the disordered dress of the dauntless songstress.

With the first out-ringing of that patriotic adjuration, a death-like stillness fell upon the angry waves that so lately surged up and roared around, threatening to swallow those two tender and defenceless beings. Men held their breath in sudden awe, and with eyes fastened upon the heroic maiden who stood so fearlessly before them, seemed ready to prostrate themselves at her feet in dumb veneration. But when she reached the last verse, and with a fervor that electrified every heart, the words—

"Amour sacré de la Patrie
Conduis, soutiens nos braves vengeurs!"

gushed forth, a perfect tempest of shouts rent the air; and the singer, borne onward as lightly as though she had floated upon that rapturous breath, was gently replaced in the carriage, with Honorine lying in her arms. The eyes of the unconscious girl were still closed, and her sweet, upturned face gave no signs of life, save the slow trickling of the red drops.

Amid deafening hurrahs, the horses of the Marquis de St. Amar were released from their harness, and Sylvie saw them dash past the window.

"They will find their way back, and their presence will give the alarm," was her rapid thought as she turned her eyes anxiously upon Honorine.

A dozen men had taken the places of the noble steeds, and were preparing to bear the young singer in triumph and in safety homeward.

"Have the goodness to tell us where you live, Mademoiselle," said one of the artisans, addressing her in such a subdued and respectful tone that she could hardly recognise him as the individual who had seized the unlucky Claudine.

Sylvie essayed to speak, forgetting her inability in the agitation of the moment, but no sound issued from her colorless lips. Happily her tablets were in her girdle. She opened them and wrote, "Rue d'Angoulême, numero ——."

The man repeated the street and number to his comrades, and it was echoed from mouth to mouth. Then the carriage dashed through the parted crowd amid prolonged huzzas that followed it on its way, for a rapidly moving throng kept dangerously close to the wheels.

They reached the Rue d'Angoulême. The songstress descended from the carriage, still holding Honorine in her arms; but, light as was her weight, now that the strength imparted by excitement subsided with the peril by which it had been produced, the exhausted maiden tottered upon the threshold. One of the men pressed forward to relieve her of her burden, but she shook her head and loosened not her grasp. The cheers of the crowd had brought the inhabitants of the whole neighborhood to their doors and windows. Sylvie looked up, saw Mathieu for one moment, the next he was at her side. She placed Honorine in his arms, and, still clasping her motionless hand, mounted with difficulty to her own apartment.

Mademoiselle de St. Amar was laid upon the sofa, and Sylvie was kneeling beside her, aiding Madame de la Roche in her efforts to restore consciousness, when the rescued maiden slowly opened her eyes. Mathieu had disappeared. The room was filled with strangers,

Honorine gazed about her in alarm, and murmured in a terrified tone, "Sylvie! Sylvie! are we safe?"

Sylvie replied by a reassuring embrace. Just then she caught the sound of a well known voice, and rose suddenly. The Marquis de St. Amar was trying to force his way through the crowd.

"Brother! Brother!" said Honorine, extending her arms towards him.

The people would gladly have kept the "aristocrat" back, but Sylvie waved her hand. The imperative gesture was instantly obeyed, and room was made for the Marquis to pass. His sister, feeble as she was, had risen to approach him, and now sank upon his breast.

He laid her tenderly upon the sofa, and turning to Sylvie, caught both her hands and said, in a voice so tremulous that it was hardly audible, "I owe you my sister's life! How gladly I would devote to you my own, if you would accept so poor a gift!"

Sylvie withdrew the hands which grew cold at his touch,—her hueless cheek became ghastlier—her bowed head was averted. It was quickly lifted at the sound of Mathieu's voice, crying to the people to let him pass, assuring them that it was a physician whom he brought.

Sylvie saw Dr. Souvestre—made a few steps towards him, as though seeking refuge from the Marquis; but her faltering feet refused to support her, and she leaned heavily against her mother, struggling with the sense of faintness that crept over her, blinding her eyes and turning her blood to ice!

She scarcely heard Dr. Souvestre's voice whispering in her ears; "You are ill; we must get you out of this crowd into your own apartment. Take my arm. Lean on me!"

Hardly conscious, she mechanically obeyed.

The eyes of the Marquis followed her with an expression of intense disquiet. When she withdrew her hands in that manner—when she almost shrank from him—when she showed such a ready obedience to the young physician—he felt that the one had wholly lost what the other had gained.

He was roused from these depressing reflections by his sister's anxious inquiries. In reply, he told her of the return of the unharnessed horses to their stable, of the panic which ensued, and which was greatly increased by the arrival of the bruised and bewildered coachman, who could only tell that as he lay prostrate upon the ground, almost trampled to death, he heard a voice singing the Marseilles Hymn; that a moment after he was lifted up, and saw Mademoiselle de la Roche standing in the midst of the crowd, singing, with Mademoiselle de St. Amour lying in her arms, and then he had made his way through the listening throng unmolested, and rushed home.

After Pierre left the apartment the people dispersed.

Michael was despatched for a carriage, and the Marquis re-conducted his reluctant sister to the *Faubourg St. Germain.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

PARTING.

Several days elapsed before Paris sank again into a state of deceptive, transitory quietude, and the blood of her children was washed from her flagstones, ere long to be crimsoned anew with homicidal stain.

The delicately reared Honorine was completely prostrated by the shock her nervous system had sustained, and the long swoon which ensued.

The effects of exhaustion and excitement on Sylvie were merely temporary, but her parents were unwilling to allow her to venture forth. Her last brave act of devotion had doubly endeared her to Mademoiselle de St. Amar, who pined for her society, and fretted herself into a fever, because she was separated from her.

These two young maidens were bound to each other by ties as strong as though kindred blood sent its glowing current through their veins, and brought their hearts into responsive pulsation. An internal recognition of kinship revealed each to the other as a sister in spirit. Let men jeer at the friendships of women as they will, there are rich feminine natures whose tender attachment to one of their own sex is as potent, as enduring, as indispensable to happiness as the love that binds them in holy bondage to man. Honorine and Sylvie belonged to this class of beings.

The attentions of Dr. Souvestre had become so marked that Sylvie, without distinctly regarding him as a lover, began to experience an unwonted embarrassment in his presence. He had never framed his passion into definite language—he had only told Sylvie how tenderly she would be remembered by him during her absence—how earnestly he hoped not to be forgotten by her. What right had she to take it for granted that he meant to pay her the highest compliment a man can offer, and to crush his hopes by the intimation that it would not be acceptable?

The increasing awkwardness of her position towards him caused her to rejoice, when, one evening, Maitre Beaujeu unexpectedly brought the intelligence that the plans of Monsieur Le Grand were completed, and he and his company would leave for England in a couple of days.

Sylvie could not depart without bidding adieu to Honorine, who was still confined to the house by indisposition. It was with no little difficulty that Monsieur and Madame de la Roche were persuaded to allow their daughter to traverse the streets, even in a close carriage, and under the protection of Maitre Beaujeu ; and when they finally consented, it was with the stipulation that she would not be absent more than a couple of hours. Sylvie regarded punctuality as one of the highest virtues, and after her promise was given, her mother knew that she would return upon the very stroke of the appointed hour.

Maitre Beaujeu and his pupil found Honorine lying upon a couch in her boudoir, looking very pale and feeble. Her brother sat beside her, reading aloud, in the hope of wiling away hours rendered tedious by her nervousness and impatience of restraint.

As he rose to greet the welcome visitors, the last words he had uttered to Sylvie, "I owe you my sister's life—how gladly I would devote to you my own, if you would accept so poor a gift," rang in her ears. She tried to persuade herself that they were spoken in the excitement of the moment—that they conveyed no meaning beyond an expression of deep gratitude—that they had been forgotten as soon as they fell from his lips; still they sounded like a haunting melody, and she could not shut them out. The coldness and reserve she had of late so successfully assumed, gave way to uncontrollable agitation, and it was well that, in bending over Honorine, her conscious face was hidden, and her emotion concealed, or attributable to anxiety for her friend.

Unable to regain her self-possession, Sylvie could not summon courage to apprise Honorine that she had come to bid her adieu, until, glancing at the clock, she found it was nearly time to return home. She rose hurriedly, wrote upon her tablets, "Tell her—I cannot," and handed them to Beaujeu, who was talking with the Marquis.

Beaujeu, completely taken aback, blurted out the important information by asking, "Have you not told Mademoiselle de St. Amar, then, that we are to leave for England to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the Marquis and his sister, in the same breath.

Honorine burst into a violent fit of weeping. A very unusual demonstration on her part—for she had shed few tears in her short and happy life. Sylvie, distressed beyond measure, glanced up imploringly at Beaujeu, as though to petition him to try to pacify her.

The Marquis comprehended the look, and, probably deeming the musician incompetent to such a task, seated himself beside his sister, and said:

"Why, Honorine, you have not remembered the new pleasure in store for you. Think how much you will enjoy corresponding with Mademoiselle Sylvie. I expect to find you marring paper in the most indefatigable manner."

Honorine smiled through her tears, and sobbed out, "You will write to me, Sylvie, will you not?"

Sylvie traced the word "Often" upon her tablets.

"And you will bring her back very soon, Monsieur Beaujeu, will you not?" asked the weeping girl.

"As soon as you can send us word that France is sufficiently peaceful and prosperous to welcome her singing birds back," replied Beaujeu.

Sylvie pointed to the clock, and wiping away the tears that still sparkled upon Honorine's lashes, embraced her fervently, gently unclasped the hands that clung about her own neck, bowed to the Marquis, and was out of the room before

Maitre Beaujeu could make his adieux. The host followed and handed her into the carriage, but his lips were mute as hers.

The next morning Ursule and Sylvie, Maitre Beaujeu and his new *valet*, Mathieu, were on their way to London.

A few days more and Sylvie's parents, and her devoted friend, were gladdened by letters. The travellers had arrived in safety. The company of Monsieur Le Grand was on the eve of its first dreaded appearance before a coldly critical English audience.

The next letter was from Ursule, and gave an account of Sylvie's brilliant *débût*, and of the impression made by Maitre Beaujeu's performance of Paganini's wonderful "Witch Dance."

This epistle was rapidly succeeded by others of the same character. The youthful songstress soared at once to a high pinnacle. The very singularity of her affliction enlisted unwonted interest—doubled her attraction—and gave transcendent value to her gift. She was styled "*The Mute Singer*," and the title itself piqued curiosity and encompassed her with a mystery-loving crowd of worshippers.

With mingled humility and gratitude, she wrote to her mother that, not out of her *talents* but her *trial*, had sprung her sudden prosperity; and that she was daily more and more convinced that she owed the favor of the public, in a large degree, to the peculiarity of her privation; as much to the power *lost* as to the power preserved.

Ursule's letters were of a more gossipping character than those of Sylvie; they were fuller of pleasant details and minute descriptions of passing events. But for them Sylvie's parents might not have known the industry with which their daughter was prosecuting studies unallied with those of her profession; nor of the attentions she received from distinguished sources; nor of the admirers who murmured at her unresponsive insensibility; nor of Maitre Beaujeu's vexation at the persecution of some determined suitors; nor of the summary manner in which he extinguished their aspirations.

Sylvie in her letters never touched upon these subjects, and wrote little of herself. She described the places they visited, and often dwelt upon the books she read; but always spoke briefly of her public appearances, and the tokens of approbation lavished upon her.

Honorine often visited Madame de la Roche, accompanied by her brother; and it soon became a matter of course for them to peruse Ursule's letters as well as those of Sylvie to her parents.

Dr. Souvestre was also a frequent guest in the Rue d'Angoulême, and the privilege of reading the letters of the travellers was accorded to him also.

The Marquis not only made the acquaintance of the young physician, whom he regarded as Sylvie's future husband, but by his patronage and friendship was instrumental in greatly extending his practice, and placing him in an enviable social position—one which the nobleman believed Sylvie would hereafter share—and sharing, would assuredly *grace.*

Before long the health of Monsieur de la Roche was sufficiently restored for him to enter upon his duties as secretary to Count Damoreau. The Count was the possessor of large estates in different parts of France, and his secretary had the charge of all his correspondence in regard to this property. Everard de la Roche, although he fully appreciated, we may say *gloried* in the importance of his new office, discharged his duties with a punctuality and prudence which could hardly have been expected from one who had passed his life in pursuing phantoms. But the severe lessons taught him through the misfortunes he had brought upon himself by his sanguine recklessness, had disciplined his mind to distinguish and resist tempting shadows, and cling to sober substance. The tree, all blossoms and leaves, was bearing wholesome fruit at last.

Month followed month, and Paris, in spite of its provisional government, and its incipient republicanism, was not in a sufficiently settled state for Monsieur Le Grand to deem return desirable. Besides this, the success of his company in Great Britain was unabated. It was now November, and the *corps* of Monsieur Le Grand, after making the tour of England, Scotland, and Ireland, came back to London to embark for Hamburg, with the intention of visiting Germany.

The year for which the young vocalist was engaged had nearly expired before the leader announced that he proposed to return to Paris.

The affection Beaujeu and Ursule experienced for Sylvie had not only steadily increased, but their mutual attraction to that magnetic centre had drawn them towards each other. When they were forced to contemplate resuming the olden routine of their existence in Paris, Beaujeu thought with a sigh of his lonely bachelor life (his mother had died during his absence), and began to reflect that, painful as a separation from Sylvie would be, he would miss even more his daily intercourse with Ursule—his pleasant chats with her, and the little attentions which it seemed so natural for each to pay to, or receive from, the other. Then he gravely asked himself whether it was *absolutely needful* that this separation should take place. He had no sooner propounded that important question to himself than, without preface, premeditation, or ceremony, he asked it of her:

"Why should we two separate? *I* see no reason that renders it imperative. Do *you* see any?" he asked, abruptly.

Ursule was too much amazed to reply.

Beaujeu repeated the question in an authoritative voice, as though commanding an answer.

His tone startled Ursule into a laconic "No."

"That's right; I like a direct answer, and like it all the better for being short," continued Beaujeu.

"We two have had many happy hours together during the last year. *I* enjoy your society; *you* do not seem to dislike mine. Do you think you would necessarily tire of me, if you had more of my company?"

The "no" this time was given more promptly, as if there would be lack of courtesy in hesitation.

"Soon after we reach Paris, then, I will look out for lodgings that will suit *both*. I never purchased a piece of jewelry in my life, but I mean to buy a *wedding-ring*, if you will promise to let me put it upon your finger. Will you?"

This time Ursule varied her negatives by an affirmative, but she did not add another word.

"I thought you would say 'yes,' or I would not have asked you," replied Beaujeu, diving his fingers into his snuffbox as eagerly as though he expected to find the proposed wedding-ring at its bottom. Then he added, without any attempt at playing the lover, "I confess I am glad not to be mistaken in supposing that you did not dislike me, rough and crabbed as I am; I hope you are glad that I broached the subject of our remaining together. Now, as we have neither father nor mother, nor relatives, nor any one to care for us but Sylvie, let us dutifully ask her consent."

Sylvie very merrily expressed her approval of the anticipated union, and delighted Ursule by begging to be allowed to officiate as bridesmaid.

For Ursule, at her time of life, to trust her happiness in the hands of one so constitutionally irascible and domineering as Beaujeu, may seem a venturesome step. But there is a class of women who positively enjoy being *ruled*;—of course, they deny it to themselves and to others, but a loving tyrant is always their hero. Then, Maitre Beaujeu's temper was by no means as violent as when we first made his acquaintance. It had been calmed down by the tenderness developed in his intercourse with Sylvie, by the compassionate gentleness which her patient sufferings and humble endurance of bitter disappointments inspired—by the softening influence of her example upon his character.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

We pass over the joy of Monsieur and Madame de la Roche when their gentle and gifted daughter was restored to them.

Before her arrival, Dr. Souvestre had made known his hopes to her parents, and obtained permission to address Sylvie.

The young and agreeable physician was high in favor with her father, who was too much elated with the prospect of securing such a son-in-law for *reticence* or delay to be possible to his communicative and impulsive nature. Only a few hours after his daughter's return, he delightedly informed her of Dr. Souvestre's suit and his own approval.

His surprise was only surpassed by his disappointment, when she earnestly entreated that her suitor might be prevented from touching upon a subject which must give her excessive pain, as she would be forced to meet his proposals with an unqualified refusal.

Monsieur de la Roche squandered a large amount of eloquence in representing the folly of her determination; but Sylvie was firm in her resolution; so firm that her father was impressed with the possibility of her having formed some other attachment. Her confusion, when he suddenly asked that searching question, confirmed his suspicions. He insisted upon an ingenuous reply. Sylvie's upright nature could not bend to falsehood, even upon a subject which has custom's sanction for untruth; she, accordingly, gave no answer.

While Monsieur de la Roche was strongly urging her to confide in him, Dr. Souvestre was announced; but, before he could enter, Sylvie escaped from the apartment, making a gesture as she fled that supplicated her father not to summon her back.

Monsieur de la Roche, with much hesitation, executed the difficult task of communicating Sylvie's rejection to her lover; trying to soften the unflattering truth by the no less palatable information that her parents had reason to believe their daughter's affections were already engaged.

Dr. Souvestre was at first confounded—then wounded—then inclined to be angry, not exactly with Sylvie or her father, but with all the world, including himself. Regret and dejection succeeded to passion, and in this mood he took his leave.

As he was descending the stairs, he encountered the Marquis de St. Amar and his sister. Honorine was too impatient to behold her friend to bestow upon him more than a passing salutation as she hurried on. Her brother stopped and shook hands. It was impossible not to perceive the physician's disordered appearance.

"You look disturbed; has anything happened to distress you?" asked the nobleman, kindly.

Dr. Souvestre was one of those beings to whom sympathy, under disappointment, was indispensable—to conceal a pang was to double its poignancy.

"Nothing more than happens to deluded men every day," he replied, with a stoical air, which the prospective relief of confiding in another rendered it more easy to assume. "I have submitted myself to mortification—made a fool of myself, and gained my deserts; that ends the matter."

"You do not mean——" began the Marquis, and hesitated.

"I mean that I have been distinctly rejected by the father of Mademoiselle de la Roche, and in her name! He informed me that her heart was no longer at her disposal. It is very strange! To whom can she be attached? The letters of Mademoiselle Valette clearly and frequently stated that she had proved insensible to all the advances made during her travels; and before she left Paris she was not acquainted with any gentlemen but the Marquis de St. Amar and her physician."

What a delicious suggestion was unintentionally infused into these words! At their breath a long buried hope burst its cerements and sprang back to life—a hope that must at once receive Sylvie's sanction for its existence, or be entombed anew.

The Marquis could not frame any direct reply; but, muttering something about joining his sister, passed on and entered the drawing-room.

As Sylvie rose to welcome him, he noted her changing color, the almost imperceptible quivering of her lip, and the slight tremulousness of the hand she permitted him to clasp for an instant; his interpretations of these auguries arched over the head of that resuscitated hope its most glorious rainbow.

He seated himself beside her and talked with the same genial ease and gaiety which had characterized his conversation before those sad days of sudden estrangement. Sylvie's slender fingers glanced rapidly over the leaves of her tablets in reply.

Honorine, either because she was charmed to see her brother resume his olden deportment towards her friend, or because she had a sort of instinct against being *de trop*, prattled away to Monsieur and Madame de la Roche. They chanced to be seated at some distance from their daughter and the Marquis.

The table near Sylvie was heaped with books which had been taken from her trunks, and were not yet arranged in order. Several volumes had been selected before she left from the little bookcase, and had accompanied her upon her journeyings. In turning over the handsomely bound volumes, the eyes of the Marquis rested upon one which he could not have placed in that elegant library, for the cover was dingy and worn. He took it up to read the title—it was Sylvie's Bible —for she was a Protestant, and the "good book" was in daily use. As he held it lightly in his hands, two sprigs of pressed and withered heliotrope fell from between the leaves. He lifted them up—recognised them—replaced them—and, turning to Sylvie a face in which a whole history was written in luminous characters of the soul, said in a low, thrilling tone:

"You have kept them! May I dare to believe that you have cherished the memory of him who gave them?"

Sylvie's fingers did not grasp her pencil or open her tablets; she had seized the little volume and closed it upon the tell-tale heliotropes—her head was bowed over it so closely that her countenance was no longer visible.

"The time has come," continued the Marquis, "when I feel that I may venture to plead for an explanation of the past. Need I tell you that almost from the first moment we met, you inspired me with a feeling which has only strengthened with every hour? You were very young—very immature—it behooved me to wait, in silence and with patience, until your character was formed, and you were aware of your own capacity to respond to my emotions. But while I waited, an icy shape, to which I could give no name, rose up between us, and with outstretched arms tore us asunder. You withdrew yourself from my sister's society and my own—you refused her entreaties to grant her any explanation of the mysterious change. I will not tell you what anguish I endured, and how zealously I sought for the cause of your inexplicable demeanor. I thought I had found it; I thought you suspected my passion and were too generous to encourage it, after bestowing your heart upon a younger, and, doubtless, more captivating man."

Sylvie's eyes, lifted for a brief instant in genuine amazement, would have convinced the Marquis of his error, had not the delusion been already dispelled.

"That look tells me I was wrong—I know it already. Dr. Souvestre ingenuously told me so himself. *Then* I dared to entertain the hope that you did not shun me from indifference. These flowers have confirmed that precious belief."

Sylvie's head drooped lower and lower, as though she could not lift it from her breast.

"I fear I have been very abrupt," he resumed, "but I have suffered so long that I could not tolerate another moment's doubt. Will you trust your happiness in my keeping? I implore you to reply. Your father's eyes are turned upon us inquiringly—tell me that I may ask him if he is willing to confide his child to my tender care."

Sylvie's great heart heaved as though it would burst from her breast; she took up her pencil and tablets—they dropped unused, but in the hand, which the Marquis extended to receive what she wrote, she timidly placed her own.

Clasping it fervently, he rose and led her towards her parents. The action had a most eloquent language of its own, but the entrance of Maitre Beaujeu and Monsieur Le Grand prevented him from interpreting it into speech.

Le Grand held a business-like paper in his hand.

After the customary salutations, Maitre Beaujeu said to Sylvie, "To-day your contract with Monsieur Le Grand expires. He has come to ask if you will renew it for another year, and you will find how liberally he has dealt when you peruse that paper."

Sylvie mechanically took the offered document. The Marquis gently put it aside.

"My dear Monsieur Beaujeu," he remarked, "it is a very valueless instrument. Mademoiselle Sylvie only waits the consent of her parents to enter into another engagement which will preclude the possibility of her fulfilling this—an engagement of somewhat longer duration—an engagement *for life*, which I trust will secure her happiness in exchange for laurels—home joys instead of public adulation—the voice of love to replace the clamorous voices of the multitude."

Honorine sprang up and threw her arms about Sylvie.

"My sister! My sister! Now you are indeed a sister! Did I not always say and feel that you were my sister, though I had not the wit to remember that there was a way by which you could legally become one? Oh, I am so rejoiced! I never dreamed there was such happiness in store, Sylvie; did you?"

If Sylvie's answering look could have found voice upon her lips, her reply might have been concentrated in that outburst of a grateful heart wondering at its own joy, which was made musical by the breath of Aurora Leigh when she exclaimed:

> "God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame!"

THE END.

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